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A

TOUR

THROUGH

SICILY AND MALTA.

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS

TO

WILLIAM BECKFORD, Esq.

OF SOMERLY IN SUFFOLK;

FROM

P. BRYDONE, F. R. S.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

A NEW EDITION.

VOL. I.

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HAD there been any book in our language on the ſubject of the following Letters, they never ſhould have ſeen the light. The Author wrote them for the amuſement of his friends, and as an aſſiſtance to his memory; and if it will in any degree apologize for their imperfections, he can with truth declare that they never were intended for publication: nor indeed was that idea ſuggeſted to him, till long after they were written. One principal motive he will own, was the deſire of giving to the world, and perhaps of tranſmitting to poſterity,

a monument of his friendſhip with the gentleman to whom they are addreſſed.

When Mr. Forſter's tranſlation of Baron Reideſel's book firſt appeared, theſe Letters were already in the preſs, and the Author apprehended an anticipation of his ſubject; however, on peruſal he had the ſatisfaction to find, that the two works did not much interfere.

In tranſcribing them for the preſs, he found it neceſſary both to retrench and to amplify; by which the eaſe of the epiſtolary ſtyle has probably ſuffered, and ſome of the letters have been extended much beyond their original length.

He

He now preſents them to the Public with the greateſt diffidence; hoping that ſome allowance will be made for the very inconvenient circumſtances, little favourable to order or preciſion, in which ſome of them were written: But he would not venture to new-model them; apprehending, that what they might gain in form and expreſſion, they would probably loſe in eaſe and ſimplicity; and well knowing that the original impreſſions are better deſcribed at the moment they are felt, than from the moſt exact recollection.

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A TOUR


An Accurate MAP of
SICILY and MALTA,
Drawn and Engraved for
BRYDONE's TOUR
through those Islands.
By T. Kitchin Geographer,
Hydrographer to His MAJESTY.
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4 8 12 16 20 24 28 32 36 40
12 Longitude East from London.
Published according to Act of Parliament Sept.r 12. 1774.
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ISLES OF LIPARI
VALDI MAZZARA
VALDI NOTO
VALDI DEMONE
CALABRIA
MALTA I.
GOZZO I.
COMMINO I.
Strombolo
Salini
Lipari
Volcanello
Volcano
Felicudi
Alicudi
Falconara
Trapanum
Favignana
Marsala
Mazzara
Sciacca
Girgenti
Licata
Terra nova
Augusta
Syracuse
Catania
Taurominum
Messina
Melazzo
Milazzo
Cefalu
Termini
Palermo
Trapani
Melita or Citta Vecchia
VALETTA
C. Passero
Capo Scaramia
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C. Rasocolmieri
C. Delimara
Marsa Scirocco
Fort St. Paul
Fort St. Angelo
Fort St. Elmo
Fort St. Salvador
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Fort St. Michael
Fort St. Rocco
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Fort St. Margaret
Fort St. Dingli
Fort St. Benedetto
Fort St. Sceglia
Fort St. Madalena
Fort St. Nunciata
Fort St. Bosquetta
Fort St. Lucian
Fort St. Sceglia

A

TOUR

THROUGH

SICILY AND MALTA.

LETTER I.

DEAR BECKFORD, Naples, May 14, 1770.

I Remember to have heard you regret, that in all your peregrinations through Europe, you had ever neglected the iſland of Sicily; and had ſpent much of your time in running over the old beaten track, and in examining the thread-bare ſubjects of Italy and France; when probably there were a variety of objects, not leſs intereſting,

that ſtill lay buried in oblivion in that celebrated iſland. We intend to profit from this hint of yours.—Fullarton has been urging me to it with all that ardour, which a new proſpect of acquiring knowledge ever inſpires in him; and Glover, your old acquaintance, has promiſed to accompany us.

The Italians repreſent it as impoſſible: as there are no inns in the iſland, and many of the roads are over dangerous precipices, or through bogs and foreſts, infeſted with the moſt reſolute and daring banditti in Europe. However, all theſe conſiderations, formidable as they may appear, did not deter Mr. Hamilton *, his lady, and Lord Fortroſe †. They made this expedition laſt ſummer; and returned ſo much delighted with it, that they have animated us with the ſtrongeſt deſire of enjoying the ſame pleaſure.

* Now Knight of the Bath. † Now Earl of Seaforth.

Our

Our firſt plan was to go by land to Regium, and from thence, croſs over to Meſſina; but on making exact inquiry with regard to the ſtate of the country, and method of travelling, we find that the danger from the banditti in Calabria and Apulia is ſo great, the accommodations ſo wretched, and inconveniencies of every kind ſo numerous, without any conſideration whatever to throw into the oppoſite ſcale, that we ſoon relinquiſhed that ſcheme; and in ſpite of all the terrors of Scylla and Charybdis, and the more real terrors of ſea ſickneſs (the moſt formidable monſter of the three), we have determined to go by water: And that no time may be loſt, we have already taken our paſſage on board an Engliſh ſhip, which is ready to ſail with the firſt fair wind.

Now, as this little expedition has never been conſidered as any part of the grand tour; and as it will probably preſent

many objects worthy of your attention, not mentioned in any of our books of travels; I flatter myself that a short account of these will not be unacceptable to you; and may in some degree make up for your having neglected to visit them. You may therefore expect to hear of me, from every town where we stop; and when I meet with any thing deserving of notice, I shall attempt to describe it in as few words as possible. We have been waiting with impatience for a fair wind, but at present there is little prospect of it. The weather is exceedingly rough, and not a ship has been able to get out of the harbour for upwards of three weeks past. This climate is by no means what we expected to find it; and the serene sky of Italy, so much boasted of by our travelled gentlemen, does not altogether deserve the great eulogiums bestowed upon it. It is now the middle of May, and we have not as yet had any continuance of what may be called

ſine weather. It has, indeed, been abundantly warm, but ſeldom a day has paſſed without ſudden ſtorms of wind and rain, which render walking out here to the full as dangerous to our invalids, as it is in England.

I am perſuaded that our phyſicians are under ſome miſtake with regard to this climate. It is certainly one of the warmeſt in Italy; but it is as certainly one of the moſt inconſtant; and from what we have obſerved, diſagrees with the greateſt part of our valetudinarians; but more particularly with the gouty people, who have all found themſelves better at Rome; which, though much colder in winter, is, I believe, a healthier climate. Naples to be ſure is more eligible in ſummer, as the air is conſtantly refreſhed by the ſea breeze, when Rome is often ſcorched by the móſt inſupportable heat. Laſt ſummer, Fahrenheit's thermometer never roſe higher at

Naples than 76. At Rome it was at 89. The difference is often ſtill more conſiderable. In winter it is not leſs remarkable. Here, our greateſt degree of cold was in the end of January; the thermometer ſtood at 36; at Rome it fell to 27; ſo that the diſtance between the two extremes of heat and cold laſt year at Naples, was only 40 degrees; whereas at Rome it was no leſs than 62. Yet, by all accounts, their winter was much more agreeable and healthy than ours: For they had clear froſty weather whilſt we were deluged with rains, accompanied with very high wind. The people here aſſure us, that in ſome ſeaſons it has rained every day for ſix or ſeven weeks. But the moſt diſagreeable part of the Neapolitan climate is the ſirocc or ſouth-eaſt wind, which is very common at this ſeaſon. It is infinitely more relaxing, and gives the vapours in a much higher degree, than the worſt of our rainy Novembers. It has now blown for theſe

ſeven

ſeven days without intermiſſion; and has indeed blown away all our gaiety and ſpirits; and if it continues much longer, I do not know what may be the conſequence. It gives a degree of laſſitude, both to the body and mind, that renders them abſolutely incapable of performing their uſual functions. It is not perhaps ſurpriſing, that it ſhould produce theſe effects on a phlegmatic Engliſh conſtitution; but we have juſt now an inſtance, that all the mercury of France muſt ſink under the load of this horrid, leaden atmoſphere. A ſmart Pariſian marquis came here about ten days ago: he was ſo full of animal ſpirits that the people thought him mad. He never remained a moment in the ſame place; but, at their grave converſations, uſed to ſkip from room to room with ſuch amazing elaſticity, that the Italians ſwore he had got ſprings in his ſhoes. I met him this morning, walking with the ſtep of a philoſopher; a ſmelling bottle in

his hand, and all his vivacity extinguiſhed. I aſked what was the matter? "Ah! mon "ami," ſaid he, "je m'ennui à la mort; "—moi, qui n'ai jamais ſçu l'ennui. "Mais cet execrable vent m'accable; et "deux jours de plus, et je me pend."

The natives themſelves do not ſuffer leſs than ſtrangers; and all nature ſeems to languiſh during this abominable wind. A Neapolitan lover avoids his miſtreſs with the utmoſt care in the time of the ſirocc; and the indolence it inſpires, is almoſt ſufficient to extinguiſh every paſſion. All works of genius are laid aſide, during its continuance; and when any thing very flat or inſipid is produced, the ſtrongeſt phraſe of diſapprobation they can beſtow is, "Era ſcritto in tempo del ſirocco;" that it was writ in the time of the ſirocc. I ſhall make no other apology for this letter; and whenever I happen to tire you, be kind enough to remember (pray do) that

it

it is not me you are to blame, but the ſirocc wind. This will put me much at my eaſe, and will ſave us a world of time in apologies.

I have been endeavouring to get ſome account of the cauſe of this very ſingular quality of the ſirocc; but the people here ſeldom think of accounting for any thing, and I do not find, notwithſtanding its remarkable effects, that it has ever yet been an object of inquiry amongſt them.

I have not obſerved that the ſirocc makes any remarkable change in the barometer. When it firſt ſet in, the mercury fell about a line and a half; and has continued much about the ſame height ever ſince; but the thermometer was at 43 the morning it began, and roſe almoſt immediately to 65; and for theſe two days paſt it has been at 70 and 71. However, it is certainly not the warmth of this wind,

that

that renders it ſo oppreſſive to the ſpirits; it is rather the want of that genial quality, which is ſo enlivening; and which ever renders the weſtern breeze ſo agreeable: The ſpring and elaſticity of the air ſeems to be loſt; and that active principle which animates all nature, appears to be dead. This principle we have ſometimes ſuppoſed to be nothing elſe than the ſubtle electric fluid that the air uſually contains; and indeed, we have found, that during this wind, it appears to be almoſt annihilated, or at leaſt, its activity exceedingly reduced. Yeſterday, and to-day, we have been attempting to make ſome electrical experiments; but I never before found the air ſo unfavourable for them.

Sea-bathing we have found to be the beſt antidote againſt the effects of the ſirocc; and this we certainly enjoy in great perfection. Lord Fortroſe, who is the ſoul of our colony here, has provided a large

large commodious boat for this purpoſe. We meet every morning at eight o'clock, and row about half a mile out to ſea, where we ſtrip and plunge into the water: Were it not for this, we ſhould all of us have been as bad as the French marquis. My lord has ten watermen, who are in reality a ſort of amphibious animals, as they live one half the ſummer in the ſea. Three or four of theſe generally go in with us, to pick up ſtragglers, and ſecure us from all accidents. They dive with eaſe to the depth of forty, and ſometimes of fifty feet, and bring up quantities of excellent ſhell-fiſh during the ſummer months; but ſo great is their devotion, that every time they go down they make the ſign of the croſs, and mutter an Avè Maria, without which they think they ſhould certainly be drowned; and were not a little ſcandalized at us for omitting this ceremony. To accuſtom us to ſwimming in all circumſtances, my lord has provided a ſuit of clothes, which

we

we wear by turns; and from a very ſhort practice, we have found it almoſt as commodious to ſwim with as without them; we have likewiſe learned to ſtrip in the water; and find it no very difficult matter: And I am fully perſuaded, from being accuſtomed to this kind of exerciſe, that in caſe of ſhipwreck we ſhould have greatly the advantage over thoſe who had never practiſed it; for it is by the embarraſſment from the clothes, and the agitation that people are thrown into, from finding themſelves in a ſituation they had never experienced before, that ſo many lives are loſt in the water.

After bathing, we have an Engliſh breakfaſt at his lordſhip's; and after breakfaſt, a delightful little concert, which laſts for an hour and a half. Barbella, the ſweeteſt fiddle in Italy, leads our little band. This party, I think, conſtitutes one principal part of the pleaſure we enjoy at

Naples.

Naples. We have likewiſe ſome very agreeable ſociety amongſt ourſelves, though we cannot boaſt much of that with the inhabitants. There are to be ſure many good people amongſt them; but in general, there is ſo very little analogy betwixt an Engliſh and a Neapolitan mind, that the true ſocial harmony, that great ſweetener of human life, can ſeldom be produced. In lieu of this (the exchange you will ſay is but a bad one), the country round Naples abounds ſo much in every thing that is curious, both in art and nature, and affords ſo ample a field of ſpeculation for the naturaliſt and antiquary, that a perſon of any curioſity may ſpend ſome months here very agreeably, and not without profit.

Beſides the diſcoveries of Herculaneum and Pompeia, which, of themſelves, afford a great fund of entertainment, the whole coaſt that ſurrounds this beautiful bay, particularly that near Puzzoli, Cuma, Micenum,

Micenum, and Baia, is covered with innumerable monuments of Roman magnificence. But, alas! how are the mighty fallen! This delightful coaſt, once the garden of all Italy, and inhabited only by the rich, the gay, and luxurious, is now abandoned to the pooreſt and moſt miſerable of mortals. Perhaps, there is no ſpot on the globe, that has undergone ſo thorough a change; or that can exhibit ſo ſtriking a picture of the vanity of human grandeur. Thoſe very walls that once lodged a Cæſar, a Lucullus, an Anthony, the richeſt and moſt voluptuous of mankind; are now occupied by the very meaneſt and moſt indigent wretches on earth, who are actually ſtarving for want in thoſe very apartments that were the ſcenes of the greateſt luxury. There we are told that ſuppers were frequently given, that coſt fifty thouſand pounds; and ſome that even amounted to double that ſum.

The luxury indeed of Baia was ſo great, that it became a proverb, even amongſt the luxurious Romans themſelves; and, at Rome, we often find them upbraiding with effeminacy and epicuriſm, thoſe who ſpent much of their time in this ſcene of delights; Clodius throws it in Cicero's teeth more than once: And that orator's having purchaſed a villa here, hurt him not a little in the opinion of the graver and more auſtere part of the ſenate. The walls of theſe palaces ſtill remain, and the poor peaſants, in ſome places, have built up their miſerable huts within them; but, at preſent, there is not one gentleman or man of faſhion reſiding in any part of this country; the former ſtate of which, compared with the preſent, certainly makes the moſt ſtriking contraſt imaginable. Yeſterday we rode over the greateſt part of it a ſhooting porcupines, a new ſpecies of diverſion, which I had never heard of before. We killed ſeveral of theſe animals on the

Monte Barbaro, the place that formerly produced the Falernian wine, but now a barren waſte. I don't know if you are acquainted with this kind of ſport. To me, I own, its novelty was its greateſt merit; and I would not at any time give a day of partridge for a month of porcupine ſhooting. Neither indeed is the fleſh of theſe animals the moſt delicious in the world, though to-day moſt of us have dined upon it. It is extremely luſcious, and ſoon palls upon the appetite.

We are now going to lay in our ſea-ſtore, as there is ſome probability that we ſhall fail in a day or two.—Farewell—you ſhall hear from me again at Meſſina, if we are not ſwallowed up by Charybdis.

LETTER II.

On board the Charming Molly, off the Iſland of Caprè, May 15.

WE have now begun our expedition with every auſpicious omen. This morning the melancholy ſirocc left us; and in place of it we have gotten a fine briſk tramontane (or North wind) which in a few hours blew away all our vapours, and made us wonder how much the happineſs of mankind depends on a blaſt of wind. After eating a hearty dinner with many of our friends at Mr. Walter's, and drinking plentifully of his excellent burgundy, we took leave in the higheſt ſpirits. Had the ſirocc blown as yeſterday, we ſhould probably have been in tears; and not one of us would have ſuſpected that we were crying, only becauſe the wind was in the

ſouth. We are not apt to ſuppoſe it; but probably a great part of our pleaſures and pains depend upon ſuch trivial cauſes, though always aſcribed to ſomething elſe; few people being willing to own themſelves like a weathercock, affected by every blaſt. Indeed we ſhould have naturally imputed it to the grief of parting with that excellent family whom you know ſo well; which no perſon could ever leave without regret, or ſee without pleaſure; but the agreeable proſpect of ſoon meeting again (probably better qualified to amuſe and entertain them) abſorbed all melancholy thoughts; and even added to that alacrity, which the delightful tour before us had already inſpired.

We ſailed at five; and after firing our farewel ſignals to our friends on ſhore, (whom we diſcovered with our glaſſes at ſome miles diſtance) we ſoon found ourſelves in the middle of the bay of Naples,

ſurrounded by the moſt beautiful ſcenery in the world. It fell calm for an hour, on purpoſe to give us time to contemplate all its beauties.

The bay is of a circular figure; in moſt places upwards of 20 miles in diameter; ſo that including all its breaks and inequalities, the circumference is conſiderably more than 60 miles. The whole of this ſpace is ſo wonderfully diverſified, by all the riches both of art and nature, that there is ſcarce an object wanting to render the ſcene complete; and it is hard to ſay, whether the view is more pleaſing from the ſingularity of many of theſe objects, or from the incredible variety of the whole. You ſee an amazing mixture of the ancient and modern; ſome riſing to fame, and ſome ſinking to ruin. Palaces reared over the tops of other palaces, and ancient magnificence trampled under foot—by modern folly.—Mountains and iſlands, that were

celebrated for their fertility, changed into barren waſtes, and barren waſtes into fertile fields and rich vineyards. Mountains ſunk into plains, and plains ſwelled into mountains. Lakes drunk up by volcanos, and extinguiſhed volcanos turned into lakes. The earth ſtill ſmoking in many places; and in others throwing out flame.—In ſhort, Nature ſeems to have formed this coaſt in her moſt capricious mood; for every object is a *luſus naturæ*. She never ſeems to have gone ſeriouſly to work; but to have devoted this ſpot to the moſt unlimited indulgence of caprice and frolic.

The bay is ſhut out from the Mediterranean by the iſland of Caprè, ſo famous for the abode of Auguſtus; and afterwards ſo infamous for that of Tiberius. A little to the weſt lie thoſe of Iſchia, Procida, and Niſida; the celebrated promontory of Micænum, where Æneas landed; the claſſic fields of Baia, Cuma, and Puzzoli; with

with all the variety of ſcenery that formed both the Tartarus and Elyſium of the ancients; the Campi Phlegrei, or burning plains where Jupiter overcame the giants; the Monte Novo, formed of late years by fire; the Monte Barbaro; the pictureſque city of Puzzoli, with the Solfaterra ſmoking above it; the beautiful promontory of Pauſillippe, exhibiting the fineſt ſcenery that can be imagined; the great and opulent city of Naples, with its three caſtles, its harbour full of ſhips from every nation, its palaces, churches, and convents innumerable. The rich country from thence to Portici, covered with noble houſes and gardens, and appearing only a continuation of the city. The palace of the king, with many others ſurrounding it, all built over the roofs of thoſe of Herculaneum, buried near a hundred feet, by the eruptions of Veſuvius. The black fields of lava that have run from that mountain, intermixed with gardens, vineyards, and orchards.

Veſuvius itſelf, in the back ground of the ſcene, diſcharging volumes of fire and ſmoke, and forming a broad track in the air over our heads, extending without being broken or diſſipated to the utmoſt verge of the horizon. A variety of beautiful towns and villages, round the baſe of the mountain, thoughtleſs of the impending ruin that daily threatens them. Some of theſe are reared over the very roofs of Pompeia and Stabia, where Pliny periſhed; and with their foundations have pierced through the ſacred abodes of the ancient Romans; thouſands of whom lie buried here, the victims of this inexorable mountain. Next follows the extenſive and romantic coaſt of Caſtello Mare, Sorrentum, and Mola; diverſified with every picturesque object in nature. It was the ſtudy of this wild and beautiful country that formed our greateſt landſcape-painters. This was the ſchool of Pouſſin and Salvator Roſa, but more particularly of the laſt,

who

who compoſed many of his moſt celebrated pieces from the bold craggy rocks that ſurround this coaſt; and no doubt it was from the daily contemplation of theſe romantic objects, that they ſtored their minds with that variety of ideas they have communicated to the world with ſuch elegance in their works.

Now, ſhould I tell you that this extenſive coaſt, this prodigious variety of mountains, vallies, promontories and iſlands, covered with an everlaſting verdure, and loaded with the richeſt fruits, is all the produce of ſubterraneous fire; it would require, I am afraid, too great a ſtretch of faith to believe me; yet the fact is certain, and can only be doubted by thoſe who have wanted time or curioſity to examine it. It is ſtrange, you will ſay, that Nature ſhould make uſe of the ſame agent to create as to deſtroy; and that what has only been looked upon as the conſumer of

countries, is in fact the very power that produces them. Indeed, this part of our earth ſeems already to have undergone the ſentence pronounced upon the whole of it; but, like the phœnix, has riſen again from its own aſhes, in much greater beauty and ſplendour than before it was conſumed. The traces of theſe dreadful conflagrations are ſtill conſpicuous in every corner; they have been violent in their operations, but in the end have proved ſalutary in their effects. The fire in many places is not yet extinguiſhed, but Veſuvius is now the only ſpot where it rages with any degree of activity.

Mr. Hamilton, our miniſter here, who is no leſs diſtinguiſhed in the learned, than in the polite world, has lately examined it with a truly philoſophic eye, and this is the reſult of all his obſervations; however, at preſent, I only ſit down to give you an account of the proſpect of this ſingular country,

country, and not to write its natural hiſtory; which would lead me into too vaſt a field; I ſhall reſerve that curious ſubject till our return, when I ſhall have more leiſure to make you acquainted with it.—I beg therefore you would at leaſt ſuſpend your judgment for the preſent, and do not condemn me before I am heard.

After contemplating this delightful proſpect, till ſun-ſet, the wind ſprung up again, and we have now almoſt reached Caprè, 30 miles diſtant from Naples. We have juſt ſpoken with an Engliſh ſhip. They tell us, that the marquis of Carmarthen, Lord Fortroſe, and Mr. Hamilton obſerving the calm, took a boat to make us a viſit; but unfortunately miſtaking their veſſel for ours, we have had the mortification to miſs them.

The night is very dark; and Mount Veſuvius is flaming at a dreadful rate: we

can

can obſerve the red-hot ſtones thrown to a vaſt height in the air; and, after their fall, rolling down the ſide of the mountain. Our ſhip is going ſo ſmooth, that we are ſcarce ſenſible of the motion; and if this wind continue, before to-morrow night we ſhall be in ſight of Sicily. Adieu. The captain is making a bowl of grog, and promiſing us a happy voyage.

16th. All wrong—Sick to death—Execrable ſirocc wind, and directly contrary—Vile heaving waves—A plague of all ſea voyages—That author was ſurely right, who ſaid, that *land voyages* * were much to be preferred.

17th in the morning. For theſe 24 hours paſt we have been groaning to one another from our beds; execrating the waves, and wiſhing that we had rather been at the mercy of all the banditti of

* See *Tour to the Eaſt.*

Calabria.

Calabria. We are now beginning to change our tune. The ſirocc is gone, and the wind is conſiderably fallen; however, we are ſtill three woeful figures. Our ſervants too are as ſick and as helpleſs as we. The captain ſays, that Philip, our Sicilian man, was frightened out of his wits; and has been praying to St. Januarius with all his might. He now thinks he has heard him, and imputes the change of the weather entirely to his intereſt with his ſaint.

17th. Three o'clock. Weather pleaſant and favourable.—A fine breeze ſince ten; —have juſt come in ſight of Strombolo. Our pilot ſays it is near 20 leagues off. We have likewiſe a view of the mountains of Calabria, but at a very great diſtance. Ship ſteady; and ſea-ſickneſs almoſt gone.

Eleven at night. The weather is now fine, and we are all well. After ſpying Strombolo, by degrees we came in ſight of the

the reſt of the Lipari iſlands, and part of the coaſt of Sicily. Theſe iſlands are very pictureſque, and ſeveral of them ſtill emit ſmoke, particularly Volcano, and Volcanello; but none of them, for ſome ages paſt, except Strombolo, have made any eruptions of fire. We are juſt now lying within about three miles of that curious iſland, and can ſee its operations diſtinctly. It appears to be a volcano of a very different nature from Veſuvius, the exploſions of which ſucceed one another with ſome degree of regularity, and have no great variety of duration. Now I have been obſerving Strombolo, ever ſince it fell dark, with a good deal of pleaſure, but not without ſome degree of perplexity, as I cannot account for its variety. Sometimes its exploſions reſemble thoſe of Veſuvius, and the light ſeems only to be occaſioned by the quantity of fiery ſtones thrown into the air; and as ſoon as theſe have fallen down, it appears to be extinguiſhed, till another

exploſion

exploſion cauſes a freſh illumination: this I have obſerved always to be the caſe with Veſuvius; except when the lava has riſen to the ſummit of the mountain, and continued without variety to illuminate the air round it.—The light from Strombolo evidently depends on ſome other cauſe. Sometimes a clear red flame iſſues from the crater of the mountain, and continues to blaze without interruption, for near the ſpace of half an hour. The fire is of a different colour from the exploſions of ſtones, and is evidently produced from a different cauſe. It would ſeem as if ſome inflammable ſubſtance were ſuddenly kindled up in the bowels of the mountain. It is attended with no noiſe, nor exploſion that we are ſenſible of. It has now fallen calm, and we ſhall probably have an opportunity of examining this volcano more minutely to-morrow. We are told at Naples that it had lately made a violent eruption, and had begun to form a new

iſland

iſland at ſome little diſtance from the old; which piece of intelligence was one of our great inducements to this expedition. We think we have diſcovered this iſland, as we have obſerved ſeveral times the appearance of a ſmall flame riſing out of the ſea, a little to the ſouth-weſt of Strombolo; and ſuppoſe it muſt have iſſued from this new iſland; but it is poſſible this light may come from the lower part of the iſland of Strombolo itſelf. We ſhall ſee to-morrow.

18th. We are ſtill off Strombolo, but unfortunately at preſent it intercepts the view of that ſpot from whence we obſerved the flame to ariſe, and we can ſee no appearance of any new iſland, nor indeed of any lava that has of late ſprung from the old one. We have a diſtinct view of the crater of Strombolo, which ſeems to be different from Veſuvius, and all the old volcanos that ſurround Naples. Of theſe, the craters are without exception

tion in the center, and form the higheſt part of the mountain. That of Strombolo is on its ſide, and not within 200 yards of its ſummit. From the crater to the ſea, the iſland is entirely compoſed of the ſame ſort of aſhes and burnt matter as the conical part of Veſuvius; and the quantity of this matter is perpetually increaſing, from the uninterrupted diſcharge from the mountain; for of all the volcanos we read of, Strombolo ſeems to be the only one that burns without ceaſing. Ætna and Veſuvius often lie quiet for many months, even years, without the leaſt appearance of fire, but Strombolo is ever at work, and for ages paſt has been looked upon as the great light-houſe of theſe ſeas.

It is truly wonderful, how ſuch a conſtant and immenſe fire is maintained for thouſands of years, in the midſt of the ocean! That of the other Lipari iſlands

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ſeems now almoſt extinct, and the force of the whole to be concentered in Strombolo, which acts as one great vent to them all. We ſtill obſerve Volcano and Volcanello throwing out volumes of ſmoke, but during the whole night we could not perceive the leaſt ſpark of fire from either of them.

It is probable, that Strombolo, as well as all the reſt of theſe iſlands, is originally the work of ſubterraneous fire. The matter of which they are compoſed, in a manner demonſtrates this; and many of the Sicilian authors confirm it. There are now eleven of them in all; and none of the ancients mention more than ſeven. Fazzello, one of the beſt Sicilian authors, gives an account of the production of Volcano, now one of the moſt conſiderable of theſe iſlands. He ſays it happened in the early time of the republic, and is recorded by Euſebius, Pliny, and others. He adds, that

even

even in his time, in the beginning of the 16th century, it ſtill diſcharged quantities of fire and of pumice ſtones; but that in the preceding century, in the year 1444, on the 5th of February, there had been a very great eruption of this iſland, which ſhook all Sicily, and alarmed the coaſt of Italy as far as Naples. He ſays the ſea boiled all around the iſland, and rocks of a vaſt ſize were diſcharged from the crater; that fire and ſmoke in many places pierced through the waves, and that the navigation amongſt theſe iſlands was totally changed; rocks appearing where it was formerly deep water; and many of the ſtraits and ſhallows were entirely filled up. He obſerves, that Ariſtotle, in his book on meteors, takes notice of a very early eruption of this iſland, by which not only the coaſt of Sicily, but likewiſe many cities in Italy were covered with aſhes. It has probably been that very eruption which formed the iſland. He deſcribes Strombolo

to have been in his time, pretty much the ſame as at this day; only that it then produced a great quantity of cotton, which is not now the caſe. The greateſt part of it appears to be barren. On the north ſide there are a few vineyards; but they are very meagre: oppoſite to theſe, there is a rock at ſome diſtance from land; it ſeems to be entirely of lava, and is not leſs than 50 or 60 feet above the water.

The whole iſland of Strombolo is a mountain that riſes ſuddenly from the ſea; it is about ten miles round, and is not of the exact conical form, ſuppoſed common to all volcanos. We were determined to have landed on the iſland, and to have attempted to examine the volcano; but our Sicilian pilot aſſures us, that the crater is not only inacceſſible (which indeed I own it appears to be), but that we ſhall likewiſe be obliged to perform a quarantine of 48 hours at Meſſina; and that beſides, we

ſhould

ſhould run a great riſk of being attacked by the natives, who are little better than ſavages, and always on the alarm againſt the Turks.—On weighing theſe reaſons, and putting the queſtion, it was carried, To proceed on our voyage.

I own it is with much regret that I leave this curious iſland, without being better acquainted with it. I have been looking with a good glaſs all round, but can ſee no marks of the eruption we heard ſo much of at Naples; indeed, the ſouth-weſt part, where we ſaw the appearance of fire, is ſtill hid from us by the interpoſition of the iſland; and if there has been an eruption, it was certainly on that ſide: it is probable we ſhall never be able to learn whether there has been one or not; or, at leaſt, to make ourſelves maſters of any of the particulars relating to it; for events of that kind do not make ſuch a

noiſe in this ignorant and indolent country, as the blowing of an aloe, or a gooſeberry buſh at Chriſtmas, does in England. Strombolo riſes to a great height; our pilot ſays, higher than Veſuvius; but I think he is miſtaken. Both the captain and he agree, that in clear weather it is diſcoverable at the diſtance of 25 leagues; and that at night its flames are to be ſeen ſtill much farther; ſo that its viſible horizon cannot be leſs than 500 miles, which will require a very conſiderable elevation.

The revenue theſe iſlands bring to the King of Naples is by no means inconſiderable. They produce great quantities of alum, ſulphur, nitre, cinnabar, and moſt ſorts of fruits, particularly raiſins, currants, and figs, in great perfection; ſome of their wines are likewiſe much eſteemed; particularly the Malvaſia, well known all over Europe.

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The iſland of Lipari (from which all the reſt take the name) is by much the largeſt, as well as the moſt fertile. By the deſcription of Ariſtotle, it appears that it was in his time, what Strombolo is in ours, conſidered by ſailors as a light-houſe, as its fires were never extinguiſhed. It has not ſuffered from ſubterraneous fires for many ages paſt, though it every where bears the marks of its former ſtate. This is the iſland ſuppoſed by Virgil (who is one of our travelling companions) to be the habitation of Æolus; but indeed all of them were formerly called Æolian. As they were full of vaſt caverns, roaring with internal fires, the poets feigned that Æolus kept the winds priſoners here, and let them out at his pleaſure. This allegorical fiction is of great uſe both to Virgil and Homer, when they want to make a ſtorm, and forms no inconſiderable part of their machinery. A goddeſs has nothing to do but take a

flight to the Lipari iſlands, and Æolus, who, was the very pink of courteſy, has always a ſtorm ready at her command.

Homer, indeed, departing ſadly from his uſual dignity, ſuppoſes that Æolus kept the winds here, each tied up in their reſpective bags; and when any particular wind was demanded, he made them a preſent of a bag full of it, to uſe at diſcretion. Some of the ancient hiſtorians (Diodorus, I think) ſays that this fable took its riſe from a wiſe king named Æolus; who, from obſerving the ſmoke of theſe burning iſlands, and other phænomena attending them, had learned to foretel the weather; and from thence was ſaid to have the command of the winds.

The forge of Vulcan too has been ſuppoſed by the poets to be placed in Hiera, one of theſe iſlands. Virgil ſends him here, to make the celeſtial armour for Æneas,

Æneas, and gives a noble deſcription of this gloomy habitation *, where he found the Cyclops buſy forging a thunderbolt for Jupiter; the account of which is very ſingular †. This iſland is now called Volcano, the ſame that is recorded to have been produced by fire in the time of the Republic. So that Virgil commits here a very great anachroniſm, in ſending Vulcan to a place which at that time did not exiſt, nor for many ages after. But this bold poetical licence he amply repays us

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* Amid the Heſperian and Sicilian flood
All black with ſmoke, a rocky iſland ſtood,
The dark Vulcanian land, the region of the god.
Here the grim Cyclops ply, in vaults profound,
The huge Æolian forge that thunders round.
Th' eternal anvils ring the dungeon o'er;
From ſide to ſide the fiery caverns roar, &c.

† Beneath their hands, tremendous to ſurvey!
Half rough, half form'd, the dreadful engine lay.
Three points of rain; three forks of hail conſpire;
Three arm'd with wind, and three were barb'd with fire,
The maſs they temper'd thick with livid rays,
Fear, wrath, and terror, and the lightning's blaze.

PITT.

for, by the fine deſcription he gives of it. Theſe iſlands, he ſays, were called Volcanian as well as Æolian:

" Volcani domus, et Volcania nomine tellus."

So that the change of the name from Hiera to Volcano was a very natural one. This is the iſland that Pliny calls Teraſia; and both Strabo and he gave an account of its production.

19th. Found ourſelves within half a mile of the coaſt of Sicily, which is low, but finely variegated. The oppoſite coaſt of Calabria is very high, and the mountains are covered with the fineſt verdure. It was almoſt a dead calm, our ſhip ſcarce moving half a mile in an hour, ſo that we had time to get a complete view of the famous rock of Scylla, on the Calabrian ſide, Cape Pylorus on the Sicilian, and the celebrated Straits of the Faro that runs between them. Whilſt we were ſtill ſome

miles

miles diſtant from the entry of the Straits, we heard the roaring of the current, like the noiſe of ſome large impetuous river confined between narrow banks. This increaſed in proportion as we advanced, till we ſaw the water in many places raiſed to a conſiderable height, and forming large eddies or whirlpools. The ſea in every other place was as ſmooth as glaſs. Our old pilot told us, that he had often ſeen ſhips caught in theſe eddies, and whirled about with great rapidity, without obeying the helm in the ſmalleſt degree. When the weather is calm, there is little danger; but when the waves meet with this violent current, it makes a dreadful ſea. He ſays, there were five ſhips wrecked in this ſpot laſt winter. We obſerved that the current ſet exactly for the rock of Scylla, and would infallibly have carried any thing thrown into it againſt that point; ſo that it was not without reaſon the ancients have painted it as an object of ſuch terror. It

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is about a mile from the entry of the Faro, and forms a ſmall promontory, which runs a little out to ſea, and meets the whole force of the waters, as they come out of the narroweſt part of the Straits. The head of this promontory is the famous Scylla. It muſt be owned that it does not altogether come up to the formidable deſcription that Homer gives of it; the reading of which (like that of Shakeſpeare's Cliff) almoſt makes one's head giddy. Neither is the paſſage ſo wondrous narrow and difficult as he makes it. Indeed it is probable that the breadth of it is greatly increaſed ſince his time, by the violent impetuoſity of the current. And this violence too muſt have always diminiſhed, in proportion as the breadth of the channel increaſed.

Our pilot ſays, there are many ſmall rocks that ſhew their heads near the baſe of the large ones. Theſe are probably the

dogs

dogs that are deſcribed as howling round the monſter Scylla. There are likewiſe many caverns that add greatly to the noiſe of the water, and tend ſtill to increaſe the horror of the ſcene. The rock is near 200 feet high. There is a kind of caſtle or fort built on its ſummit; and the town of Scylla, or Sciglio, containing three or four hundred inhabitants, ſtands on its ſouth ſide, and gives the title of prince to a Calabreſe family.

As the current was directly againſt us, we were obliged to lie to, for ſome hours, till it turned. The motion of the water ceaſed for ſome time, but in a few minutes it began in the oppoſite direction, though not with ſuch violence. We lay juſt oppoſite to Cape Pylorus (where the light-houſe is now built). It is ſaid to have been thus named by Hannibal, in recompenſe to Pelorus, his pilot, for having put him to death on this ſpot, on a falſe ſuſpicion of his

his wanting to betray him: for ſeeing himſelf land-locked on all ſides, he thought there was no eſcaping, and that Pelorus had been bribed to deliver him up; but as ſoon as he diſcovered the Straits, he repented of his raſhneſs, and ſome years afterwards erected a ſtatue here, in atonement to the manes of Pelorus. Pomponius Mela tells this ſtory; from whence he draws two very wiſe inferences: That Hannibal muſt have been extremely paſſionate; and that he knew nothing at all of geography. Others deny this authority, and ſay it was named Pelorus from Ulyſſes's pilot, who was drowned near to this place; but there can be no ſort of foundation for this conjecture; for Ulyſſes' whole crew were drowned at the ſame time, and he himſelf was driven through theſe Straits, mounted on the broken maſt of his ſhip. It is like moſt diſputes amongſt antiquaries, a matter of mighty little conſequence; and I leave you at full liberty

to chooſe which of the two accounts you pleaſe.

From hence we had an opportunity of obſerving a pretty large portion of Calabria, which formerly conſtituted a conſiderable part of that celebrated country, known by the name of Great Greece, and looked upon as one of the moſt fertile in the empire. Theſe beautiful hills and mountains are covered with trees and bruſhwood to the very ſummit; and appear pretty much in the ſame ſtate as ſome of the wilds of America that are juſt beginning to be cultivated. Some little ſpots where the woods are cleared away, juſt ſerve to ſhew the natural fertility of the ſoil; and what this country might ſoon be brought to, were induſtry and population encouraged; but it ſtill remains a good deal in the ſame ſituation as when the barbarous nations left it; and I believe it is hard to ſay, whether their tyranny or that of Spain has been

been the moſt oppreſſive. After the invaſion of thoſe nations, and during the time of the dark and barbarous ages, this country (like many others), from the higheſt ſtate of culture and civilization, became a wild and barren wilderneſs, overgrown with thickets and foreſts; and indeed, ſince the revival of arts and agriculture, perhaps of all Europe this is the country that has profited the leaſt; retaining ſtill, both in the wildneſs of its fields and ferocity of its inhabitants, more of the Gothic barbarity than is to be met with any where elſe. Some of theſe foreſts are of a vaſt extent and abſolutely impenetrable; and no doubt conceal in their thickets many valuable monuments of its ancient magnificence. Of this indeed we have a very recent proof in the diſcovery of Peſtum, a Grecian city, that had not been heard of for many ages; till of late ſome of its lofty temples were ſeen, peeping over the tops of the woods; upbraiding mankind for their ſhameful neglect;

glect; and calling upon them to bring it once more to light. Accordingly curioſity, and the hopes of gain, a ſtill more powerful motive, ſoon opened a paſſage, and expoſed to view theſe valuable and reſpectable relics.—But here it would be out of place to give you an account of them; I ſhall reſerve that till my return.

As ſoon as our ſhip entered the current we were carried along with great velocity towards Meſſina, which is twelve miles from the entry of the Straits. However, as the paſſage widens in proportion as you advance, the current of conſequence becomes leſs rapid. At Meſſina it is four miles broad. At the mouth of the Straits, betwixt the promontories of Pelorus in Sicily, and the Coda de Volpe (or the Fox's Tail) in Calabria, it appears ſcarcely to be a mile. Moſt of the ancient writers are of opinion that Sicily was formerly joined to the continent in this ſpot, and that the

ſeparation

ſeparation muſt have been made by ſome violent convulſion of the earth. If this is true, which indeed does not appear improbable, it muſt have happened far beyond the reach of all hiſtorians, as none of them at leaſt that I have ſeen, pretend any thing but conjecture for the foundation of their opinion. Indeed Claudian (were credit to be given to poets) ſays poſitively,

" Trinacria quondam Italiæ pars una fuit."

And Virgil too, in his third Eneid, tells the ſame ſtory:

" Hæc loca vi quondam, et vaſta convulſa
" ruina, &c."

Pliny, Strabo, Diodorus, and many others, both hiſtorians and philoſophers, are of the ſame ſentiments, and pretend that the ſtrata in the oppoſite ſides of the Strait perfectly correſpond: like the white rocks near Dover and Bologne, which have given riſe to an opinion of the ſame kind. However,

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the ſimilarity, in that caſe, is much more ſtriking to the eye at leaſt than in this.

The approach to Meſſina is the fineſt that can be imagined; it is not ſo grand as that of Naples, but it is much more beautiful, and the key exceeds any thing I have ever yet ſeen even in Holland. It is built in the form of a creſcent, and is ſurrounded by a range of magnificent buildings, four ſtories high, and exactly uniform, for the ſpace of an Italian mile. The ſtreet betwixt theſe and the ſea is about an hundred feet wide, and forms one of the moſt delightful walks in the world. It enjoys the freeſt air, and commands the moſt beautiful proſpect: it is only expoſed to the morning ſun, being ſhaded all the reſt of the day by theſe buildings. It is beſides conſtantly refreſhed by the cooling breeze from the Straits; for the current of the water produces likewiſe a current in the air,

that renders this one of the cooleſt habitations in Sicily.

We caſt anchor about four this afternoon, near the center of this enchanted ſemicircle, the beauty of which greatly delighted us; but our pleaſure was ſoon interrupted by a diſcovery that the name of one of our ſervants had been omitted in our bills of health; and an aſſurance from the captain, that if he was diſcovered we ſhould certainly be obliged to perform a long quarantine. Whilſt we were deliberating upon this weighty matter, we obſerved a boat with the people of the health-office approaching us. We had juſt time to get him wrapped up in a hammock, and ſhut down below the hatches; with orders not to ſtir in caſe of a ſearch, and not to appear again above deck till he ſhould be called. The poor fellow was obliged to keep in his hole till it was dark, as our conſul and ſome people

people of the health-office ſtayed on board much longer than we could have wiſhed, and we are ſtill obliged to conceal him; for if he be diſcovered, we ſhall probably get into a very bad ſcrape. They are particularly ſtrict here in this reſpect: and indeed they have great reaſon to be ſo; ſince this beautiful city was almoſt annihilated by the plague in the year 1743, when upwards of 70,000 people are ſaid to have died in it and its diſtrict in the ſpace of a few months.

We have now got on ſhore, and are lodged in the moſt wretched of inns; although ſaid to be a firſt-rate one for Sicily; but we are contented; for ſurely after bad ſhip-accommodation and ſea-ſickneſs, any houſe will appear a palace, and any bit of dry land a paradiſe.

I ſhall ſend this off by the poſt, which goes to-morrow for Naples, and ſhall con-

tinue from day to day to give you ſome account of our tranſactions; trifling as they are, there will probably be ſomething new; and it will add greatly to the pleaſure of our expedition, to think that it has contributed to your entertainment. Adieu.

Ever yours, &c.

LETTER III.

Meſſina, May 20.

THE harbour of Meſſina is formed by a ſmall promontory or neck of land that runs off from the eaſt end of the city, and ſeparates that beautiful baſon from the reſt of the Straits. The ſhape of this promontory is that of a reaping hook, the curvature of which forms the harbour, and ſecures it from all winds. From the ſtriking reſemblance of its form, the Greeks, who never gave a name that did not either deſcribe the object or expreſs ſome of its moſt remarkable properties, called this place Zancle or the Sickle, and feigned that the ſickle of Saturn fell on this ſpot, and gave it its form. But the Latins, who were not quite ſo fond of fable, changed its name to Meſſina (from *meſſis*, a harveſt)

becauſe of the great fertility of its fields. It is certainly one of the ſafeſt harbours in the world after ſhips have got in; but it is likewiſe one of the moſt difficult acceſs. The celebrated gulph or whirlpool of Charybdis lies near to its entry, and often occaſions ſuch an inteſtine and irregular motion in the water, that the helm loſes moſt of its power, and ſhips have great difficulty to get in, even with the faireſt wind that can blow. This whirlpool, I think, is probably formed by the ſmall promontory I have mentioned; which contracting the Straits in this ſpot, muſt neceſſarily increaſe the velocity of the current; but no doubt other cauſes, of which we are ignorant, concur; for this will by no means account for all the appearances which it has produced. The great noiſe occaſioned by the tumultuous motion of the waters in this place, made the ancients liken it to a voracious ſea-monſter perpetually roaring for its prey; and it has been repre-

repreſented by their authors, as the moſt tremendous paſſage in the world. Ariſtotle gives a long and a formidable deſcription of it in his 125th chapter De Admirandis, which I find tranſlated in an old Sicilian book I have got here. It begins, "Adeo "profundum, horridumque ſpectaculum, "&c." but it is too long to tranſcribe. It is likewiſe deſcribed by Homer *, 12th of the Odyſſey; Virgil †, 3d Æneid; Lucretius,

* Dire Scylla there a ſcene of horror forms,
And here Charybdis fills the deep with ſtorms:
When the tide ruſhes from her rumbling caves,
The rough rock roars; tumultuous boil the waves;
They toſs, they foam, a wild confuſion raiſe,
Like waters bubbling o'er the fiery blaze;
Eternal miſts obſcure th' aerial plain,
And high above the rock ſhe ſpouts the main,
When in her gulphs the ruſhing ſea ſubſides,
She drains the ocean with her refluent tides.
The rock re-bellows with a thundering ſound;
Deep, wondrous deep, below appears the ground.
POPE.

† That realm of old, a ruin huge was rent,
In length of ages from the continent.
With force convulſive burſt the iſle away;
Through the dread opening broke the thundering ſea.

tius, Ovid, Salluſt, Seneca, as alſo by many of the old Italian and Sicilian poets, who all ſpeak of it in terms of horror; and repreſent it as an object that inſpired terror, even when looked on at a diſtance. It certainly is not now ſo formidable: and very probably, the violence of this motion, continued for ſo many ages, has by degrees worn ſmooth the rugged rocks, and jutting ſhelves, that may have intercepted and confined the waters. The breadth of the Straits too, in this place, I make no doubt is conſiderably enlarged. Indeed, from the nature of things it muſt be ſo; the perpetual friction occaſioned by the current muſt

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At once the thundering ſea Sicilia tore,
And ſunder'd from the fair Heſperian ſhore;
And ſtill the neighbouring coaſts and towns divides
With ſcanty channels and contracted tides.
Fierce to the right tremendous Scylla roars,
Charybdis on the left the flood devours:
Thrice ſwallow'd in her womb ſubſides the ſea,
Deep, deep as hell; and thrice ſhe ſpouts away
From her black bellowing gulphs diſgorg'd on high
Waves after-waves, that daſh againſt the ſky. PITT.

wear

wear away the bank on each ſide, and enlarge the bed of the water.

The veſſels in this paſſage were obliged to go as near as poſſible to the coaſt of Calabria, in order to avoid the ſuction occaſioned by the whirling of the waters in this vortex; by which means when they came to the narroweſt and moſt rapid part of the Straits, betwixt Cape Pelorus and Scylla, they were in great danger of being carried upon that rock. From whence the proverb, ſtill applied to thoſe, who in attempting to avoid one evil fall into another,

"Incidit in Scyllam, cupiens evitare Caribdem."

There is a fine fountain of white marble on the key, repreſenting Neptune holding Scylla and Charybdis chained, under the emblematical figures of two ſea-monſters, as repreſented by the poets.

The little neck of land, forming the harbour of Meſſina, is ſtrongly fortified.

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The citadel, which is indeed a very fine work, is built on that part which connects it with the main land. The farthermoſt point, which runs out to ſea, is defended by four ſmall forts, which command the entry into the harbour. Betwixt theſe lie the lazaret, and a light-houſe to warn ſailors of their approach to Charybdis, as that other on Cape Pelorus is intended to give them notice of Scylla.

It is probably from theſe light-houſes (by the Greeks called Pharoi) that the whole of this celebrated Strait has been denominated the Faro of Meſſina.

There are a number of gallies and galliots in this beautiful harbour, which ſtill add greatly to its beauty. Three of theſe ſailed this morning, in order to cruize round the iſland, and to protect it from the ſudden invaſions of the Barbarians, who are often very troubleſome on the ſouth

coaſt. Theſe veſſels made a very pictureſque appearance as they went out of the harbour; their oars moving all together, with the greateſt regularity. I think there are nine or ten men to each oar; and indeed it appears to be the hardeſt work you can imagine. They all riſe, every ſtroke of the oar, and when they pull, they almoſt throw themſelves on their backs, and ſeem to exert their utmoſt force. Theſe wretches are chained to their oars, and ſleep every night on the bare benches, without any thing to throw over them. Yet, what is ſtrange, notwithſtanding all the miſery they ſuffer, I am told there was never known an inſtance of any of them putting themſelves to death. They often, indeed, confer that favour upon one another, but it is only in their quarrels, and by no means out of kindneſs. In a company of Engliſh in the ſame circumſtances, promotion would probably go on much faſter, as there would be no want of vacancies,

cancies, provided only ropes and knives were to be had.

We intended this morning to have paid our reſpects to the prince of Villa Franca, the governor, and to have delivered our letters; but he is gone to his country-houſe, and as there are no carriages to be had, we are obliged to wait his arrival in town, which will probably be to-morrow or next day.

We are ſtill under a good deal of uneaſineſs about our ſervant, and are obliged to conceal him carefully from the people of the health-office, who ſeem to haunt us, as we have met them this morning in all our walks. Were he to be diſcovered, perhaps ſome of us might have the pleaſure of making a little voyage, on board one of thoſe gallies, for our amuſement. Indeed the captain of the ſhip, poor fellow, would run the greateſt riſk, who is obliged to anſwer

anſwer for every perſon on board.—We ſhall leave this place as ſoon as poſſible; for I do not believe there is much more to be ſeen about it.

20th at night. After dinner our depute-conſul (a Sicilian) carried us to ſeveral convents, where we were received by the nuns with great politeneſs and affability. We converſed with them for ſome hours through the grate, and found ſome of them by no means deficient, either in point of knowledge or ſprightlineſs; but none of them had ſincerity enough (which we met with in Portugal more than once) to acknowledge the unhappineſs of their ſituation. All pretended to be happy and contented, and declared they would not change their priſon for the moſt brilliant ſituation in life. However, ſome of them had a ſoft melancholy in their countenances, that gave the lie to their words; and I am perſuaded, in a tete-à-tete, and on a more intimate acquaintance,

quaintance, they would have told a very different ſtory. Several of them are extremely handſome; but, indeed, I think they always appear ſo; and am very certain, from frequent experience, that there is no artificial ornament, or ſtudied embelliſhment whatever, that can produce half ſo ſtrong an effect, as the modeſt and ſimple attire of a pretty young nun, placed behind a double iron grate. To ſee an amiable, unaffected, and unadorned perſon, that might have been an honour and an ornament to ſociety, make a voluntary reſignation of her charms, and give up the world and all its pleaſures, for a life of faſting and mortification, it cannot fail to move our pity;

"And pity melts the mind to love."

There is another conſideration which tends much to increaſe theſe feelings; that is, our total incapacity ever to alter her ſituation.—The pleaſure of relieving an object

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in diſtreſs, is the only refuge we have againſt the pain which the ſeeing of that object occaſions; but here, this is utterly denied us, and we feel with ſorrow, that pity is all we can beſtow.

From theſe, and the like reflections, a man generally feels himſelf in bad ſpirits after converſing with amiable nuns. Indeed, it is hardly poſſible, without a heavy heart, to leave the grate; that inexorable and impenetrable barrier.—At laſt we took our leave, expreſſing our happineſs, in being admitted ſo near them; but at the ſame time deploring our miſery, in ſeeing them for ever removed at ſo unmeaſurable a diſtance from us. They were much pleaſed with our viſit, and begged we would repeat it every day during our ſtay at Meſſina; but this might prove dangerous.

On leaving the convent, we obſerved a great concourſe of people on the top of a high

high hill, at ſome diſtance from the city. The conſul told us, it was the celebration of a great feſtival in honour of St. Francis, and was worth our going to ſee. Accordingly, we arrived juſt as the ſaint made his appearance. He was carried through the crowd with vaſt ceremony, and received the homage of the people with a becoming dignity; after which he was again lodged in his chapel, where he performs a number of miracles every day, to all thoſe who have abundance of money and abundance of faith. His miniſters, however, are only a ſet of poor greaſy capuchins; who indeed do not ſeem to have enriched themſelves in his ſervice. In general, he is but a ſhabby maſter, if one may judge by the tattered clothes of his ſervants; and St. Benedict, who does not pretend to half his ſanctity, beats him all to nothing. The people continued to dance, in ſoft Sicilian meaſures, till after ſun-ſet, when they retired. Many of the country girls are extremely

extremely handſome, and dance with a good grace. The young fellows were all in their Sunday's clothes, and made a good appearance. The aſſembly room was a fine green plain on the top of the hill. It pleaſed us very much, and put us in mind of ſome of Theocritus's deſcriptions of the Sicilian pleaſures. But Theocritus, if he could have raiſed up his head, would probably have been a good deal puzzled what to make of the ſhabby figure of St. Francis marching through amongſt them with ſuch majeſty and ſolemnity. Another part of the ceremony too would have greatly alarmed him, as indeed it did us. The whole court before the church was ſurrounded with a triple row of ſmall iron cannon, about ſix inches long; theſe were charged to the muzzle, and rammed very hard; after which they were ſet cloſe to each other, and a train laid, that completed the communication through the whole number, which muſt have exceeded

2000. Fire was ſet to the train, and in two or three minutes the whole was diſcharged by a running fire; the reports following one another ſo quick, that it was impoſſible for the ear to ſeparate them. The effect was very grand; but it would have been nothing without the fine echo from the high mountains on each ſide of the Straits, which prolonged the ſound for ſome conſiderable time after the firing was finiſhed.

The view from the top of this hill is beautiful beyond deſcription. The Straits appear like a vaſt majeſtic river, flowing ſlowly betwixt two ridges of mountains, and opening by degrees from its narroweſt point, till it ſwells to the ſize of an ocean: Its banks, at the ſame time, adorned with rich corn fields, vineyards, orchards, towns, villages, and churches. The proſpect is terminated on each ſide by the tops of high mountains covered with wood.

We

We obſerved in our walks to-day, many of the flowers that are much eſteemed in our gardens, and others too that we are not acquainted with. Larkſpur, flos Adonis, Venus' looking-glaſs, hawkſweed, and very fine lupins, grow wild over all theſe mountains. They have likewiſe a variety of flowering ſhrubs; particularly one in great plenty, which I do not recollect ever to have ſeen before: It bears a beautiful round fruit, of a bright ſhining yellow. They call it, Il pomo d'oro, or golden apple. All the fields about Meſſina are covered with the richeſt white clover, intermixed with a variety of aromatic plants, which perfume the air, and render their walks exceedingly delightful. But what is remarkable, we were moſt ſenſible of this perfume, when walking on the harbour which is at the greateſt diſtance from theſe fields. I mentioned this peculiarity to a Meſſineſe gentleman, who tells me, that the ſalt produced here by the heat of the ſun, emits

a grateful odour, ſomething like violets; and it is that, probably, which perfumes the ſea-ſhore. On conſulting Fazzello De rebus Siculis, I find he takes notice of the ſame ſingularity; and likewiſe obſerves, that the water of the Straits has a viſcous or glutinous quality, which by degrees cements the ſand and gravel together, and at laſt conſolidates them to the ſolidity of rock.

There are fine ſhady walks on all ſides of Meſſina; ſome of theſe run along the ſea-ſhore, and are for ever fanned by the cooling breeze from the Straits. The houſes are large, and moſt of the articles of life are cheap and in plenty; particularly fiſh, which are reckoned better here, than any where elſe in the Mediterranean. The hire of lodgings is next to nothing; almoſt one half of that noble range of buildings I have deſcribed, being abſolutely uninhabited ſince the deſolation of 1743; ſo that the proprietors

prietors are glad to get tenants on any terms. It now occurs to me, that from all theſe conſiderations, there is no place I have ſeen ſo admirably calculated for the reſidence of that flock of valetudinarians, which every autumn leave our country with the ſwallows, in ſearch of warm climates. I have been inquiring with regard to their winter ſeaſon, and find all agree, that, in general, it is much preferable to that of Naples. They allow, they have ſometimes heavy rain for two or three weeks; but it never laſts longer; and beſides, they have always ſome fair hours every day, when people can go out for exerciſe; for the moment the rain is over, the walks are dry, the ſoil being a light gravel.

The advantages of Meſſina over Naples in other reſpects, I think, are conſiderable. At Naples there are no walks; and, the truth is, they have no occaſion for them,

no more indeed than they have for legs; for you know as well as I, that walking there, is little leſs infamous than ſtealing; and any perſon that makes uſe of his limbs is looked upon as a blackguard, and deſpiſed by all good company. The rides too are all at a great diſtance; and you are obliged to go ſome miles on ſtreets and pavement before you get into the country; beſides paſſing the vile grotto of Pauſillipe, where you are in danger of being blinded, and ſtifled with duſt. There are ſeldom any public diverſions here; the attending of which at Naples, and complying with their bad hours, does often more than counteract all the benefit obtained from the climate. That deteſtable practice of gaming too is by no means ſo prevalent here; which, from the anxiety it occaſions to the mind, and laſſitude to the body, muſt be death to all hectic people, weak breaſts, or delicate nerves. I could ſay much more on this ſubject, but as I have many of theſe circum-

circumſtances only from the report of the inhabitants, it makes me more diffident, than if I had known them from my own experience.

We found our banker, Mr. M——, a very ſenſible man, and ſpent ſome hours with him, both this morning and evening, very agreeably. He has given us ſome account of the police of the country, the moſt ſingular, perhaps, of any in the world, to ſuch a degree, indeed, that I ſhall not venture to tell it you, till I have talked it over with ſome other people, to ſee if the accounts agree;——though from the character that gentleman bears, both here and at Naples, he is as good authority as any in the iſland.

The prince of Villa Franca is arrived; ſo that we ſhall probably have our audience to-morrow morning. Adieu—We are juſt going to ſup upon ſteaks made of the peſce

ſpada or ſword fiſh, which are caught in great plenty in theſe ſeas. The ſword of this one is upwards of four feet long; and a formidable weapon it is;—not unlike a Highland broad ſword. This fiſh, when cut, bears a perfect reſemblance to fleſh; ſo much, that none of us doubted it was beef-ſteaks they were dreſſing for us, and expreſſed our ſurpriſe at finding that diſh in Sicily.—Good night.

LETTER IV.

21ſt. WE are juſt returned from the prince's. He received us politely, but with a good deal of ſtate. He offered us the uſe of his carriages, as there are none to be hired; and, in the uſual ſtyle, deſired to know in what he could be of ſervice to us. We told him (with an apology for our abrupt departure) that we were obliged to ſet off to-morrow, and begged his protection on our journey. He replied, that he would give orders for guards to attend us, that ſhould be anſwerable for every thing; that we need give ourſelves no farther trouble; that whatever number of mules we had occaſion for, ſhould be ready at the door of the inn, at any hour we ſhould think proper to appoint: he added, that we might entirely

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rely on thoſe guards, who were people of the moſt determined reſolution, as well as of the moſt approved fidelity, and would not fail to chaſtiſe on the ſpot, any perſon who ſhould preſume to impoſe upon us.

Now, who do you think theſe truſty guards are compoſed of? Why of the moſt daring and moſt hardened villains, perhaps, that are to be met with upon earth, who, in any other country, would have been broken upon the wheel, or hung in chains; but are here publicly protected, and univerſally feared and reſpected. It was this part of the police of Sicily, that I was afraid to give you an account of: but I have now converſed with the prince's people on the ſubject, and they have confirmed every circumſtance Mr. M—— made me acquainted with.

He told me, that in this eaſt part of the iſland, called Val Demoni (from the devils that

that are ſuppoſed to inhabit Mount Ætna), it has ever been found impracticable to extirpate the banditti; there being numberleſs caverns and ſubterraneous paſſages in that mountain, where no troops could poſſibly purſue them: that beſides, as they are known to be perfectly determined and reſolute, never failing to take a dreadful revenge on all who have offended them, the prince of Villa Franca has embraced it, not only as the ſafeſt, but likewiſe as the wiſeſt and moſt political ſcheme, to become their declared patron and protector. And ſuch of them as think proper to leave their mountains and foreſts, though perhaps only for a time, are ſure to meet with good encouragement, and ſecurity in his ſervice; they enjoy the moſt unbounded confidence, which, in no inſtance, they have ever yet been found to make an improper or a diſhoneſt uſe of. They are clothed in the prince's livery, yellow and green, with ſilver lace; and wear likewiſe a badge of

their

their honourable order, which entitles them to univerſal fear and reſpect from the people.

I have juſt been interrupted by an upper ſervant of the prince's, who, both by his looks and language, ſeems to be of the ſame worthy fraternity. He tells us, that he has ordered our muleteers, at their peril, to be ready by day-break; but that we need not go till we think proper; for it is their buſineſs to attend on *noſtri eccellenzi*. He ſays, he has likewiſe ordered two of the moſt deſperate fellows in the whole iſland to accompany us; adding, in a ſort of whiſper, that we need be under no apprehenſion; for if any perſon ſhould preſume to impoſe upon us to the value of a ſingle baiocc *, they would certainly put them to death. I gave him an ounce †, which I knew was what he expected; on which he redoubled his bows and his eccellenzis,

* A ſmall coin. † About eleven ſhillings.

and

and declared we were the moſt *honorabili Signori* he had ever met with, and that if we pleaſed, he himſelf ſhould have the honour of attending us, and would chaſtiſe any perſon that ſhould dare take the wall of us, or injure us in the ſmalleſt trifle. We thanked him for his zeal, ſhewing him we had ſwords of our own. On which, bowing reſpectfully, he retired.

I can now, with more aſſurance, give you ſome account of the converſation I had with Signior M— ; who, as I ſaid, appears to be a very intelligent man, and has reſided here for theſe many years.

He ſays, that in ſome circumſtances theſe banditti are the moſt reſpectable people of the iſland ; and have by much the higheſt and moſt romantic notions of what they call their point of honour. That, however criminal they may be with regard to ſociety in general ; yet, with reſpect to one another,

another, and to every perſon to whom they have once profeſſed it, they have ever maintained the moſt unſhaken fidelity. The magiſtrates have often been obliged to protect them, and even pay them court, as they are known to be perfectly determined and deſperate; and ſo extremely vindictive, that they will certainly put any perſon to death, who has ever given them juſt cauſe of provocation. On the other hand, it never was known that any perſon who had put himſelf under their protection, and ſhewed that he had confidence in them, had cauſe to repent of it, or was injured by any of them, in the moſt minute trifle; but on the contrary, they will protect him from impoſitions of every kind, and ſcorn to go halves with the landlord, like moſt other conductors and travelling ſervants; and will defend them with their lives, if there is occaſion. That thoſe of their number, who have thus enliſted themſelves in the ſervice of ſociety, are known and

reſpected by the other banditti all over the iſland; and the perſons of thoſe they accompany are ever held ſacred. For theſe reaſons, moſt travellers chuſe to hire a couple of them from town to town; and may thus travel over the whole iſland in ſafety. To illuſtrate their character the more, he added two ſtories, which happened but a few days ago, and are ſtill in every body's mouth.

A number of people were found digging in a place where ſome treaſure was ſuppoſed to have been hid during the plague: as this had been forbid under the moſt ſevere penalties, they were immediately carried to priſon, and expected to have been treated without mercy; but luckily for the others, one of theſe heroes happened to be of the number. He wrote to the prince of Villa Franca, and made uſe of ſuch powerful arguments in their favour, that they were all immediately ſet at liberty.

This

This will ſerve to ſhow their conſequence with the civil power; the other ſtory will give you a ſtrong idea of their barbarous ferocity, and the horrid mixture of ſtubborn vice and virtue (if I may call it by that name) that ſeems to direct their actions. I ſhould have mentioned, that they have a practice of borrowing money from the country people, who never dare refuſe them; and if they promiſe to pay it, they have ever been found punctual and exact, both as to the time and the ſum; and would much rather rob and murder an innocent perſon, than fail of payment at the day appointed: and this they have often been obliged to do, only in order (as they ſay) to fulfil their engagements, and to ſave their honour.

It happened within this fortnight, that the brother of one of theſe heroic banditti having occaſion for money, and not knowing how to procure it, determined to make

make uſe of his brother's name and authority, an artifice which he thought could not eaſily be diſcovered; accordingly he went to a country prieſt, and told him his brother had occaſion for twenty ducats, which he deſired he would immediately lend him. The prieſt aſſured him that he had not then ſo large a ſum, but that if he would return in a few days it ſhould be ready for him. The other replied, that he was afraid to return to his brother with this anſwer; and deſired, that he would by all means take care to keep out of his way at leaſt till ſuch time as he had pacified him; otherwiſe he could not be anſwerable for the conſequences.—As bad fortune would have it, the very next day the prieſt and the robber met in a narrow road; the former fell a-trembling, as the latter approached, and at laſt dropped on his knees to beg for mercy. The robber, aſtoniſhed at his behaviour, deſired to know the cauſe of it. The trembling prieſt anſwered; "Il denaro,

" il denaro," the money, the money—but ſend your brother to-morrow, and you ſhall have it. The haughty robber aſſured him that he diſdained taking money of a poor prieſt; adding, that if any of his brothers had been low enough to make ſuch a demand, he himſelf was ready to advance the ſum. The prieſt then acquainted him with the viſit he had received the preceding night from his brother, by his order; aſſuring him, that if he had been maſter of the ſum, he ſhould immediately have ſupplied it.—Well, ſays the robber, I will now convince you whether my brother or I are moſt to be believed; you ſhall go with me to his houſe, which is but a few miles diſtant.—On their arrival before the door, the robber called on his brother, who never ſuſpecting the diſcovery, immediately came to the balcony; but on perceiving the prieſt, he began to make excuſes for his conduct. The robber told him, there was no excuſe to be made; that he only deſired to know the

the fact, Whether he had gone to borrow money of that prieſt in his name or not? —On his owning he had, the robber with deliberate coolneſs lifted his blunderbuſs to his ſhoulder, and ſhot him dead; and turning to the aſtoniſhed prieſt, "You will "now be perſuaded," ſaid he, "that I had "no intention of robbing you at leaſt."

You may now judge how happy we muſt be in the company of our guards. I don't know but this very hero may be one of them; as we are aſſured they are two of the moſt intrepid and reſolute fellows in the iſland. I will not cloſe this letter, till I give you ſome account of our journey. In the mean time, adieu. We are going to take a look of the churches and public buildings; but with theſe I ſhall trouble you very little.

21ſt at night. We have been very well entertained, both from what we have ſeen

and heard. We uſed to admire the dexterity of ſome of the divers at Naples, when they went to the depth of forty-eight or fifty feet, and could not conceive how a man could remain three minutes under water without drawing breath; but theſe are nothing to the feats of one Colas, a native of this place, who is ſaid to have lived for ſeveral days in the ſea, without coming to land; and from thence got the ſirname of Peſce, or the fiſh. Some of the Sicilian authors affirm, that he caught fiſh merely by his agility in the water; and the credulous Kircher aſſerts, that he could walk acroſs the Straits at the bottom of the ſea. —Be that as it will, he was ſo much celebrated for ſwimming and diving, that one of their kings (Frederick) came on purpoſe to ſee him perform: which royal viſit proved fatal to poor Peſce; for the king, after admiring his wonderful force and agility, had the cruelty to propoſe his diving near the gulph of Charybdis; and to tempt

him

him the more, threw in a large golden cup, which was to be his prize, ſhould he bring it up. Peſce made two attempts, and aſtoniſhed the ſpectators by the time he remained under water; but in the third, it is thought he was caught by the whirlpool, as he never appeared more; and his body is ſaid to have been found ſome time afterwards near Taurominum (about thirty miles diſtant) it having been obſerved, that what is ſwallowed up by Charybdis is carried ſouth by the current, and thrown out upon that coaſt. On the contrary, nothing wrecked here was ever carried through the Straits, or thrown out on the north ſide of Sicily, unleſs we believe what Homer ſays of the ſhip of Ulyſſes.

We have been again to take a view of the Straits at this famous whirlpool, and are more and more convinced, that it muſt be infinitely diminiſhed; indeed, in compariſon of what it was, almoſt reduced to

nothing. The ſea appeared to have no extraordinary motion there, and ſhips and boats ſeemed to paſs it with eaſe. When we compare this its preſent ſtate, with the formidable deſcription of ſo many ancient authors, poets, hiſtorians, and philoſophers, it appears indeed not improbable that this iſland has been torn from the continent by ſome violent convulſion, and that near to this ſpot, huge caverns have been opened, which, drinking in the waters in one courſe of the current, and throwing them out in the other, may perhaps in ſome meaſure account for the phænomena of Charybdis. —I find it deſcribed both by Homer and Virgil, as alternatively ſwallowing up, and throwing out every object that approached it *. Now, is it not probable, that theſe caverns in proceſs of time have been, in a

* Dextrum Scylla latus, lævum implacata Charybdis
Obſidet, atque imo barathri ter gurgite vaſtos
Sorbet in abruptum fluctus, rurſuſque ſub auras
Erigit alteros, et ſidera verberat unda.

great

great meaſure, filled up by the immenſe quantities of rocks, ſand, gravel, &c. that were perpetually carried in by the force of the current?—I own I am not quite ſatisfied with this ſolution, but at preſent I cannot think of a better:—The fact, however, is certain, that it muſt have been a dreadful object even in Virgil's time, elſe he never would have made Æneas and his fleet perceive its effects at ſo great a diſtance, and immediately run out to ſea to avoid it; nor would he have made Helenus at ſuch pains to caution him againſt that dangerous gulph, and adviſe him rather to make the whole tour of Sicily than attempt to paſs it. Indeed, it is ſo often mentioned both in the voyage of Æneas and Ulyſſes, and always in ſuch frightful terms, that we cannot doubt of its having been a very terrible object *.

After

* Seneca gives this account of it in a Letter to Lucillus: "Scyllam ſaxum eſſe, et quidem terribile na-

After ſeeing the beautiful harbour of Meſſina, we have found nothing much worthy of notice in the city. Some of the churches are handſome, and there are a few tolerable paintings. One ceremony, from the account they give of it, I ſhould

---

" vigantibus optime ſcio; Charybdis an reſpondeat
" fabulis perſcribi mihi deſidero, fac nos certiores,
" utrum uno tantum vento agatur in vortices, an omnis
" tempeſtas, ac mare illud contorqueat, et an verum
" ſit quidquid illo freti turbine abreptum eſt," &c.

And the following is a tranſlation from Strabo.

" Ante urbem Paululum in trajectu Charybdis
" oſtenditur: Profundum quidem immenſum: Quo
" inundationes freti: mirum in modum navigia detra-
" hunt: magnas per circumductiones, et vortices pre-
" cipitata, quibus abſorptis, ac diſſolutis; naufra-
" giorum fragmenta ad Tauromitanum littus attra-
" huntur," &c.

" Eſt igitur Charybdis," ſays Salluſt, " mare peri-
" culoſum nautis; quod contrariis fluctuum curſibus,
" colliſionem facit, et rapta quoque abſorbet."

But theſe are moderate indeed when compared to the deſcriptions of the poets.

like

like much to have ſeen: the celebration of the feaſt of the Vara. It appears, indeed, to be a very ſingular exhibition, and I am heartily ſorry it does not happen at this ſeaſon. In order to the more dignified appearance of the Virgin Mary on this occaſion, they have invented a very curious machine, which I am told repreſents heaven, or at leaſt a part of it. It is of a huge ſize, and moves through the ſtreet with vaſt pomp and ceremony. In the center is the principal figure, which repreſents the Virgin; and a little higher, there are three others to denote the Trinity. Round theſe, there are a number of wheels, ſaid to be of a very curious conſtruction. Every wheel contains a legion of angels, according to their different degrees of precedency; ſeraphims, cherubims, and powers. Theſe are repreſented by a great number of beautiful little children, all glittering in clothes of gold and ſilver tiſſue; with wings of painted feathers fixed to their

their ſhoulders. When the machine is ſet in motion, all theſe wheels move round, and the different choirs of angels continue in a conſtant flutter, ſinging Hallelujahs round the Trinity and the Virgin during the whole of the proceſſion, and are ſaid to make a moſt beautiful appearance. This is all I could learn of this ſingular ſhow, neither were we admitted to ſee the machine; conſcious, I ſuppoſe, of the ridicule of which it is ſuſceptible, they did not chuſe to unveil ſo ſacred an object to the eyes of heretics.—This iſland has ever been famous for the celebration of its feaſts, even in ancient as well as modern times. They ſpare no expence; and as they have a large ſhare both of ſuperſtition and invention, they never fail to produce ſomething either very fine, or very ridiculous. The feaſt of St. Roſolia at Palermo is ſaid to be the fineſt ſhow in Europe, and coſts that city every year a large ſum. They aſſure us there is more taſte and mag-

nificence

nificence diſplayed in it, than in any thing of the kind in Italy; and adviſe us by all means to attend it, as it happens ſome time near the middle of ſummer, when we ſhall probably be in that end of the iſland.

If you pleaſe we ſhall now take leave of Meſſina;—I did not expect to make ſo much out of it.——But it would not be fair neither: without at leaſt putting you in mind of the great veneration it has ever been held in by the reſt of Sicily, for the aſſiſtance it gave to Count Rugiero in freeing the iſland from the yoke of the Saracens; in conſideration of which, great privileges were granted it by the ſucceeding kings; ſome of which are ſaid ſtill to remain. It was here that the Normans landed; and this city, by the policy of ſome of its own inhabitants, was the firſt conqueſt they made; after which their victorious arms were ſoon extended over the

the whole iſland; and a final period put to the Saracen tyranny. Count Rugiero fixed the ſeat of government at Palermo; and put the political ſyſtem of the iſland upon a ſolid baſis; of which the form (and the form alone) ſtill remains to this day. He divided the whole iſland into three parts; one he gave to his officers, another to the church, and a third he reſerved for himſelf. Of theſe three branches he compoſed his parliament, that reſpectable body, of which the ſkeleton only now exiſts: for it has long ago loſt all its blood, nerves, and animal ſpirits; and for many ages paſt has been reduced to a perfect caput mortuum. The ſuperſtitious tyranny of Spain has not only deſtroyed the national ſpirit of its own inhabitants, but likewiſe that of every other country which has fallen under its power. Adieu.

Ever yours.

P. S. Apropos! There is one thing I had almoſt forgot, and I never ſhould have forgiven myſelf. Do you know, the moſt extraordinary phænomenon in the world is often obſerved near to this place? I laugh'd at it at firſt, as you will do; but I am now convinced of its reality; and am perſuaded too, that if ever it had been thoroughly examined by a philoſophical eye, the natural cauſe muſt long ago have been aſſigned.

It has often been remarked, both by the ancients and moderns, that in the heat of ſummer, after the ſea and air have been much agitated by winds, and a perfect calm ſucceeds, there appears, about the time of dawn, in that part of the heavens over the Straits, a great variety of ſingular forms, ſome at reſt and ſome moving about with great velocity. Theſe forms, in proportion as the light increaſes, ſeem to become more aerial; till at laſt, ſome

time before ſun-riſe, they entirely diſappear.

The Sicilians repreſent this as the moſt beautiful ſight in nature; Leanti, one of their lateſt and beſt writers, came here on purpoſe to ſee it: he ſays, the heavens appear crowded with a variety of objects: he mentions palaces, woods, gardens, &c. beſides the figures of men, and other animals, that appear in motion amongſt them. No doubt, the imagination muſt be greatly aiding, in forming this aerial creation; but as ſo many of their authors, both ancient and modern, agree in the fact, and give an account of it from their own obſervation, there certainly muſt be ſome foundation for the ſtory. There is one Giardini, a Jeſuit, who has lately written a treatiſe on this phænomenon, but I have not been able to find it: the celebrated Meſſineſe Gallo has likewiſe publiſhed ſomething on this ſingular ſubject;

if

if I can procure either of them in the iſland, you ſhall have a more perfect account of it. The common people, according to cuſtom, give the whole merit to the devil; and indeed it is by much the ſhorteſt and eaſieſt way of accounting for it. Thoſe who pretend to be philoſophers, and refuſe him this honour, are greatly puzzled what to make of it. They think it may be owing to ſome uncommon refraction, or reflection of the rays, from the water of the Straits; which, as it is at that time carried about in a variety of eddies and vortexes, muſt conſequently, ſay they, make a variety of appearances on any medium where it is reflected. This, I think, is nonſenſe; or, at leaſt, very near it; and till they can ſay more to the purpoſe, I think they had much better have left it in the hands of the old gentleman. I ſuſpect it is ſomething in the nature of our Aurora Borealis; and, like many of the great phænomena of nature, depends

upon electrical cauſes; which, in future ages, I have little doubt, will be found to be as powerful an agent in regulating the univerſe, as gravity is in this age, or as the ſubtile fluid was in the laſt.

The electrical fluid, in this country of volcanos, is probably produced in much greater quantity than in any other. The air ſtrongly impregnated with this matter, and confined betwixt two ridges of mountains; at the ſame time exceedingly agitated from below by the violence of the current, and the impetuous whirling of the waters; may it not be ſuppoſed to produce a variety of appearances? And may not the lively Sicilian imaginations, animated by a belief in dæmons, and all the wild offspring of ſuperſtition, give theſe appearances as great a variety of forms? Remember, I do not ſay it is ſo; and hope yet to have it in my power to give you a better account of this matter.

ter. However, if you ſhould ſuppoſe me in this ſtory, or in any future one I may tell you, to be inclined to the fabulous, you will pleaſe to remember, that I am now in the country of fable; this iſland having given riſe to more perhaps, except Greece, than all the world beſide. You have, therefore, only to ſuppoſe that theſe regions are ſtill contagious; and call to mind that mount Ætna has ever been the great mother of monſters and chimeras both in the ancient and the modern world. However, I ſhall, if poſſible, keep free of the infection, and entertain you only with ſuch ſubjects as fall under my own obſervation. But indeed, from what I have already heard of that wonderful mountain, the moſt moderate account of it would appear highly fabulous to all ſuch as are unacquainted with objects of this kind. Adieu. We think of ſetting off to-morrow by day-break. I am ſorry it has not been a ſtorm, that we might have had a chance of ſeeing

Pandemonium reared over our heads, and all the devils at work around it.

I ſhall leave this to be ſent by the firſt poſt, and ſhall write you again from Catana, if we eſcape unhurt from all the perils of Ætna.

Adieu,

LETTER V.

Giardini, near Taurominum, May 22d.

WE have had a delightful journey, and if all Sicily be but as agreeable, we ſhall not repent of our expedition. We left Meſſina early this morning, with ſix mules for ourſelves and ſervants, and two for our baggage. This train, I aſſure you, makes no contemptible appearance; particularly when you call to mind our front and rear-guard; by much the moſt conſpicuous part of it. Theſe are two great drawcanſir figures, armed cap-a-pie, with a broad hanger, two enormous piſtols, and a long arquebuſe: This they kept cock'd and ready for action in all ſuſpicious places; where they recounted abundance of wonderful ſtories of robberies and murders; ſome of them with ſuch very minute

circumſtances, that I am fully perſuaded they themſelves were the principal actors. However, I look upon our ſituation as perfectly ſecure; they pay us great reſpect, and take the utmoſt pains that we ſhall not be impoſed upon. Indeed, I think they impoſe upon every body except us; for they tax the bills according to their pleaſure; and ſuch cheap ones I never paid before. To-day's dinner for eleven men (our three muleteers included) and feeding for ten mules and horſes, did not amount to half a guinea. And, although we pay them high, (an ounce a day each) yet I am perſuaded they ſave us at leaſt one half of it on our bills. They entertained us with ſome of their feats, and make no ſcruple of owning their having put ſeveral people to death; but add, "Mas tutti, tutti ho-"norabilmente,"—That is to ſay, they did not do it in a daſtardly manner, nor without juſt provocation.

The ſea-coaſt of Sicily is very rich; the ſides of ſome of the mountains are highly cultivated, and preſent the moſt agreeable aſpect that can be imagined;—corn, wine, oil, and ſilk, all mixed together, and in the greateſt abundance: However, the cultivated part is but ſmall in proportion to what is lying waſte, and only ſerves to ſhew the great fertility of this iſland, were it peopled, and in induſtrious hands. The ſides of the road are covered with a variety of flowers and of flowering ſhrubs; ſome of them exceedingly beautiful. The incloſures are many of them fenced with hedges of the Indian fig, or prickly pear; as in Spain and Portugal; and our guides aſſure us, that in many of the parched ravines round Ætna, there are plenty of trees which produce both cinnamon and pepper; not ſo ſtrong, they allow, as thoſe of the ſpice iſlands, but which are ſold to the merchants at a low price, by a ſet of banditti, who dreſs themſelves like her-

mits: Theſe ſpices are mixed with the true pepper and cinnamon from the Indies, and ſent over all Europe.

The road from Meſſina to this place is extremely romantic. It lies the whole way along the coaſt, and commands the view of Calabria, and the ſouth part of the Straits; covered with chebecs, galleys, galliots, and a quantity of fiſhing-boats. The view on the right hand is confined by high mountains, on the very ſummits of which they have built ſeveral conſiderable towns and villages, which with their churches and ſteeples make a very pictureſque appearance. They have choſen this elevated ſituation, I ſuppoſe, with a double view; to protect them both from their enemies, and from the violent heat of the climate: This forenoon we found it exceſſive, but had the fineſt ſwimming in the world before dinner; which kept us cool and freſh for all the reſt of the day. We have

beſides provided ourſelves with umbrellas, without which, at this ſeaſon, travelling would be impracticable.

Betwixt this place and Meſſina, a little to the right, lie the mountains, formerly called the Nebrodes; and likewiſe the mountain of Neptune, which is reckoned the higheſt of that chain. It is celebrated for a gulph or crater on its ſummit, from whence, at particular times, there iſſues an exceeding cold wind, with ſuch violence that it is difficult to approach it. I was ſorry to paſs this ſingular mountain, but it would have delayed us a day or two to viſit it; and we are haſtening with impatience to a much greater object: it is now named Il monte Scuderio, and is ſaid to be ſo high that the Adriatic can be ſeen from its ſummit. From the deſcription they give of it, it appears evidently to be an old volcano. The Niſſo takes its riſe from this mountain; a river renowned in antiquity

for the gold found in its channel; for which reaſon, it was by the Greeks called Chryſothoas. It is ſaid, the remains of the ancient gold mines are ſtill to be ſeen near the ſource of this river; but the modern maſters of Sicily have never been enterpriſing enough to explore them. It was on this charming coaſt, where the flocks of Apollo were kept by his daughters, Phæthuſa and Lampetie; the ſeizing of which by Ulyſſes' companions, proved the cauſe of their deaths, and of all his ſubſequent misfortunes. The mountain of Tauromine is very high and ſteep, and the road up to it is exceedingly rugged.

This once famous city is now reduced to an inſignificant burgh; yet even theſe ſmall remains give a high idea of its former magnificence. The theatre, I think, is accounted the largeſt in the world. It appears to me greatly ſuperior to that of Adrian's villa, near Rome. It is entire enough,

enough, to give a very tolerable idea of the Roman theatre, and indeed aſtoniſhes by its vaſtneſs; nor can I conceive how any voice could extend through the prodigious number of people it muſt have contained. I paced about one quarter of it; over the boxes that were intended for the women, which is not near the outward circle of all; the reſt is ſo broken, that I could get no farther. It meaſured about 120 ordinary ſteps, ſo that you may conceive the greatneſs of the whole. The ſeats front mount Ætna, which makes a glorious appearance from this place; and no doubt has often diverted their attention from the ſcene. It ariſes from an immenſe baſe, and mounts equally on all ſides to its ſummit: It is juſt now throwing out volumes of white ſmoke, which do not riſe in the air, but ſeem to roll down the ſide of the mountain like a vaſt torrent. The aſcent of Ætna on each ſide is computed at about 30 miles, and the circumference

ference of its baſe at 150: I think it does not appear to be ſo much; but I ſhall probably be enabled to give you a fuller account of it afterwards.

After admiring the great theatre of Taurominum, we went to examine the Naumachia, and the reſervoirs for ſupplying it with water. About 150 paces of one ſide of the wall of the Naumachia remains; but as this is not complete, there is no judging of its original dimenſions. This is ſuppoſed to have been a large ſquare, incloſed with ſtrong walls, and capable of being filled with water on occaſion; intended for the exhibition of ſea-fights, and all naval exerciſes: There were four reſervoirs for ſupplying this with water. All are upon the ſame grand ſcale. One of theſe is almoſt entire; it is ſupported by a great number of ſtrong pillars, in the ſame manner as thoſe of Titus' baths at Rome, and ſeveral others you may have ſeen in

Italy.

Italy.—I would dwell longer on objects of this kind; but I am perſuaded deſcriptions can give but a very imperfect idea of them; and to mark out the preciſe dimenſions with a mathematical exactneſs, where there is nothing very remarkable, muſt ſurely be but a dry work, both to the writer and reader. I ſhall therefore content myſelf (I hope it will content you too) with endeavouring to communicate, as entire as poſſible, the ſame impreſſion I myſelf ſhall receive, without deſcending too much to particulars; or fatiguing myſelf or you with the menſuration of antique walls, merely becauſe they are ſuch, except where there is indeed ſomething very ſtriking and different too, from what has already been deſcribed in Italy.

I own I deſpair of ſucceſs: Few things I believe in writing being more difficult than thus "s'emparer de l'imagination," to

ſeize,

ſeize,—to make ourſelves maſters of the reader's imagination, to carry it along with us through every ſcene, and make it in a manner congenial with our own; every proſpect opening upon him with the ſame light, and ariſing in the ſame colours, and at the ſame inſtant too, as upon us: For where deſcriptions fail in this, the pleaſure of reading them muſt be very trivial. Now, perhaps, this ſame journal ſtyle is the moſt favourable of any to produce theſe effects. It is at leaſt the moſt agreeable to the writer; who never has his ſubject to ſeek, but needs only recollect what has paſſed ſince he laſt laid down the pen, and travel the day over again; and if he travels it to good purpoſe, it ought to be equally agreeable to the reader too, who thereby becomes one of the party, and bears a ſhare in all the pleaſures of the journey without ſuffering from the fatigues of it.

One

One of my greateſt difficulties, I ſee, will be the finding proper places to write in, for the inns are altogether execrable, and there is no ſuch thing as getting a room to one's ſelf: I am juſt now writing on the end of a barrel, which I choſe rather than the table, as it is farther removed from noiſe. I muſt therefore entreat you, once for all, to excuſe incorrectneſs and want of method. How can one be methodical upon a barrel!—It has ever been the moſt declared enemy to method. You might as well expect a ſermon from Bacchus, or a coherent ſpeech from our friend lord —— after he has finiſhed the third bottle. You will be pleaſed then juſt to take things as they occur. Were I obliged to be ſtrictly methodical, I ſhould have no pleaſure in writing you theſe letters; and then, if my poſition is juſt, you could have no pleaſure in reading them.

Our

Our guards have procured us beds; though not in the town of Taurominum, but in Giardini, a village at the foot of the mountain on which it ſtands. The people are extremely attentive, and have produced us an excellent ſupper and good wine, which now waits—but ſhall wait no longer. Adieu. To-morrow we intend to climb mount Ætna on this (its eaſt) ſide, if we find it practicable.

Ever yours.

LETTER VI.

Catania, May 24.

I AM already almoſt two days in arrears. Yeſterday we were ſo much fatigued with the abominable roads of mount Ætna, that I was not able to wield a pen; and to-day, I aſſure you, has by no means been a day of reſt; however, I muſt not delay any longer, otherwiſe I ſhall never be able to make up my lee-way. I am afraid you will ſuffer more from the fatigues of the journey than I at firſt apprehended.

We left Giardini at five o'clock. About half a mile farther the firſt region of mount Ætna begins, and here they have ſet up the ſtatue of a ſaint, for having prevented the lava from running up the mountain of Taurominum, and deſtroying the adjacent country;

country; which the people think it certainly muſt have done, had it not been for this kind interpoſition; but he very wiſely, as well as humanely, conducted it down a low valley to the ſea.

We left the Catania road on the left, and began to aſcend the mountain, in order to viſit the celebrated tree, known by the name of *Il Caſtagno de Cento Cavalli* (The cheſnut tree of a hundred horſe); which for ſome centuries paſt has been looked upon as one of the greateſt wonders of Ætna. We had likewiſe propoſed (if poſſible) to gain the ſummit of the mountain by this ſide, and to deſcend by the ſide of Catania; but we were ſoon convinced of the impoſſibility of this, and obliged, with a good deal of reluctance, to relinquiſh that part of our ſcheme.

As we advanced in the firſt region of Ætna, we obſerved that there had been

eruptions of fire all over this country at a great diſtance from the ſummit, or principal crater of the mountain. On our road to the village of Piedmonte, I took notice of ſeveral very conſiderable craters; and ſtones of a large ſize, ſcattered all around, that had been diſcharged from them. Theſe ſtones are preciſely ſuch as are thrown out of the crater of Mount Veſuvius; and indeed, the lava too ſeems to be of the ſame nature, though rather more porous.

The diſtance from Giardini to Piedmonte is only ten miles, but as the road is exceedingly rough and difficult, we took near four hours to travel it. The barometer, which at Giardini (on the ſea ſide) ſtood at 29 inches ten lines, had now fallen to 27 : 3. Fahrenheit's thermometer (made by Mr. Adams in London) 73 degrees. We found the people extremely curious and inquiſitive to know our errand, which when we told, many of them offered to accom-

pany us. Of theſe we choſe two; and after drinking our tea, which was matter of great ſpeculation to the inhabitants, who had never before ſeen a breakfaſt of this kind, we began to climb the mountain.

We were directed for five or ſix miles of our road by an aqueduct, which the prince of Palagonia has made at a great expence, to ſupply Piedmonte with water. After we left the aqueduct, the aſcent become a good deal more rapid, till we arrived at the beginning of the ſecond region, called by the natives *la Regione Sylvoſa*, or the woody region; becauſe it is compoſed of one vaſt foreſt, that extends all around the mountain. Part of this was deſtroyed by a very ſingular event, not later than the year 1755.—During an eruption of the volcano, an immenſe torrent of boiling water iſſued, as is imagined, from the great crater of the mountain, and in an inſtant poured down to its baſe; overwhelming

and

and ruining every thing it met with in its courſe. Our conductors ſhewed us the traces of this torrent, which are ſtill very viſible; but are now beginning to recover verdure and vegetation, which for ſome time appeared to have been loſt. The track it has left, ſeems to be about a mile and a half broad; and in ſome places ſtill more.

The common opinion, I find, is, that this water was raiſed by the power of ſuction, through ſome communication betwixt the volcano and the ſea; the abſurdity of which is too glaring to need a refutation. The power of ſuction alone, even ſuppoſing a perfect vacuum, could never raiſe water to more than thirty-three or thirty-four feet, which is equal to the weight of a column of air the whole height of the atmoſphere. But this circumſtance, I ſhould imagine, might be eaſily enough accounted for; either by a ſtream of lava

falling ſuddenly into one of the vallies of ſnow, that occupy the higher regions of the mountain, and melting it down: or, what I think is ſtill more probable, that the melted ſnow, finding vaſt caverns and reſervoirs in the mountain, where it is lodged for ſome time, till the exceſſive heat of the lava below burſts the ſides of theſe caverns, produces this phænomenon, which has been matter of great ſpeculation to the Sicilian philoſophers, and has employed the pens of ſeveral of them. The ſame thing happened in an eruption of Veſuvius laſt century, and in an inſtant ſwept away about 500 people, who were marching in proceſſion at the foot of the mountain, to implore the mediation of St. Januarius.

Near to this place we paſſed through ſome beautiful woods of cork and evergreen oak, growing abſolutely out of the lava, the ſoil having as yet hardly filled the crevices of that porous ſubſtance; and,

not

not a great way farther, I obſerved ſeveral little mountains that ſeemed to have been formed by a late eruption. I diſmounted from my mule, and climbed to the top of them all. They are ſeven in number; every one of them with a regular cup or crater on the top, and in ſome the great gulph or (as they call it) *Voragine*, that had diſcharged the burnt matter of which theſe little mountains are formed, is ſtill open. I tumbled ſtones down into theſe gulphs, and heard the noiſe for a long time after. All the fields round, to a conſiderable diſtance, are covered with large burnt ſtones diſcharged from theſe little volcanos.

From this place, it is not leſs than five or ſix miles to the great cheſnut-trees, through foreſts growing out of the lava, in ſeveral places almoſt impaſſable. Of theſe trees there are many of an enormous ſize; but the Caſtagno de Cento Cavalli is by much the moſt celebrated. I have even found it

marked in an old map of Sicily, publiſhed near an hundred years ago; and in all the maps of Ætna, and its environs, it makes a very conſpicuous figure. I own I was by no means ſtruck with its appearance, as it does not ſeem to be one tree, but a buſh of five large trees growing together. We complained to our guides of the impoſition; when they unanimouſly aſſured us, that by the univerſal tradition and even teſtimony of the country, all theſe were once united in one ſtem; that their grandfathers remembered this, when it was looked upon as the glory of the foreſt, and viſited from all quarters; that for many years paſt it had been reduced to the venerable ruin we beheld. We began to examine it with more attention, and found that there was indeed an appearance as if theſe five trees had really been once united in one. The opening in the middle is at preſent prodigious; and it does indeed require faith to believe, that ſo vaſt a ſpace

was once occupied by ſolid timber—But there is no appearance of bark in the inſide of any of the ſtumps, nor on the ſides that are oppoſite to one another. Mr. Glover and I meaſured it ſeparately, and brought it exactly to the ſame ſize; viz. 204 feet round. If this was once united in one ſolid ſtem, it muſt with juſtice indeed have been looked upon as a very wonderful phænomenon in the vegetable world, and was deſervedly ſtyled the glory of the foreſt.

I have ſince been told by the Canonico Recupero, an ingenious eccleſiaſtic of this place, that he was at the expence of carrying up peaſants with tools to dig round the Caſtagno de Cento Cavalli, and he aſſures me, upon his honour, that he found all theſe ſtems united below ground in one root. I alleged that ſo extraordinary an object muſt have been mentioned by many of their writers. He told me that it had, and produced ſeveral examples; Philateo,

Carrera, and ſome others. Carrera begs to be excuſed from telling its dimenſions, but ſays, he is ſure there was wood enough in that one tree to build a large palace. Their poet Bagolini too has celebrated a tree of the ſame kind, perhaps the ſame tree *; and Maſſa, one of their moſt eſteemed authors, ſays he has ſeen ſolid oaks upwards of 40 feet round; but adds, that the ſize of the cheſnut-trees was beyond belief, the hollow of one of which, he ſays, contained 300 ſheep; and 30 people on horſeback had often been in it at a time. I ſhall not pretend to ſay, that this is the ſame tree he means, or whether it ever was one tree or not. There are many others that are well deſerving the curioſity of travellers. One of theſe, about a mile and a half higher

* Supremos inter montes monſtroſior omni
Morſtroſi fætum ſtipitis Ætna dedit
Caſtaneam genuit, cujus modo concava cortex
Turmam equitum haud parvam continet, atque greges, &c.

on

on the mountain, is called *Il Caſtagno del Galea*; it riſes from one ſolid ſtem to a conſiderable height, after which it branches out, and is a much finer object than the other. I meaſured it about two feet from the ground, and found it 76 feet round. There is a third called *Il Caſtagno del Nave*, that it pretty nearly of the ſame ſize. All theſe grow on a thick rich ſoil, formed originally, I believe, of aſhes thrown out by the mountain.

The climate here is much more temperate than in the firſt region of Ætna, where the exceſſive heats muſt ever prevent a very luxuriant vegetation. I found the barometer had now fallen to 26 : $5\frac{1}{2}$; which announces an elevation of very near 4000 feet; equivalent in the opinion of ſome of the French academicians, to 18 or 20 degrees of latitude in the formation of a climate.

The vaſt quantity of nitre contained in the aſhes of Ætna, probably contributes greatly to increaſe the luxuriance of this vegetation; and the air too, ſtrongly impregnated with it from the ſmoke of the volcano, muſt create a conſtant ſupply of this ſalt, termed by ſome, not without reaſon, the food of vegetables.

There is the ruins of a houſe in the inſide of the great cheſnut-tree which had been built for holding the fruit it bears, which is ſtill conſiderable; here we dined with excellent appetite, and being convinced, that it was in vain to attempt getting to the top of the mountain on that ſide, we began to deſcend; and after a very fatiguing journey over old lavas, now become fertile fields and rich vineyards, we arrived about ſunſet at *Jaci Reale*, where, with no ſmall difficulty, we at laſt got lodging in a convent of Dominicans.

The

The laſt lava we croſſed before our arrival there, is of a vaſt extent, I thought we never ſhould have had done with it; it certainly is not leſs than ſix or ſeven miles broad, and appears in many places to be of an enormous depth.

When we came near the ſea, I was deſirous to ſee what form it had aſſumed in meeting with the water. I went to examine it, and found it had driven back the waves for upwards of a mile, and had formed a large black high promontory, where before it was deep water. This lava, I imagined, from its barrenneſs, for it is as yet covered with a very ſcanty ſoil, had run from the mountain only a few ages ago; but was ſurpriſed to be informed by Signor Recupero, the hiſtoriographer of Ætna, that this very lava is mentioned by Diodorus Siculus to have burſt from Ætna in the time of the ſecond Punic war, when Syracuſe was beſieged by the Romans. A detach-

detachment was ſent from Taurominum to the relief of the beſieged. They were ſtopped on their march by this ſtream of lava, which having reached the ſea before their arrival at the foot of the mountain, had cut off their paſſage; and obliged them to return by the back of Ætna, upwards of 100 miles about. His authority for this, he tells me, was taken from inſcriptions on Roman monuments found on this lava, and that it was likewiſe well aſcertained by many of the old Sicilian authors. Now as this is about 2000 years ago, one would have imagined, if lavas have a regular progreſs in becoming fertile fields, that this muſt long ago have become at leaſt arable: this however is not the caſe, and it is as yet only covered with a very ſcanty vegetation, and incapable of producing either corn or vines. There are indeed pretty large trees growing in the crevices, which are full of a rich earth; but in all probability it will be ſome hundred years yet, before

there

there is enough of it to render this land of any uſe to the proprietors.

It is curious to conſider, that the ſurface of this black and barren matter, in proceſs of time, becomes one of the moſt fertile ſoils upon earth: but what muſt be the time to bring it to its utmoſt perfection, when after 2000 years it is ſtill in moſt places but a barren rock?—Its progreſs is poſſibly as follows. The lava being a very porous ſubſtance, eaſily catches the duſt that is carried about by the wind; which, at firſt, I obſerve only yields a kind of moſs; this rotting, and by degrees increaſing the ſoil, ſome ſmall meagre vegetables are next produced; which rotting in their turn, are likewiſe converted into ſoil. But this progreſs, I ſuppoſe, is often greatly accelerated by ſhowers of aſhes from the mountain, as I have obſerved in ſome places the richeſt ſoil, to the depth of five or ſix feet and upwards; and ſtill below that, nothing but

rocks

rocks of lava. It is in theſe ſpots that the trees arrive at ſuch an immenſe ſize. Their roots ſhoot into the crevices of the lava, and lay ſuch hold of it, that there is no inſtance of the wind's tearing them up; though there are many, of its breaking off their largeſt branches. A branch of one of the great cheſnut trees, where we paſſed yeſterday, has fallen acroſs a deep gully, and formed a very commodious bridge over the rivulet below. The people ſay it was done by St. Agatha, the guardian ſaint of the mountain, who has the ſuperintendence of all its operations.

In the loweſt part of the firſt region of Ætna, the harveſt is almoſt over; but in the upper parts of the ſame region, near the confines of the Regione Sylvoſa, it will not begin for ſeveral weeks.

The reapers, as we went along, abuſed us from all quarters, and more excellent black-

black-guards I have never met with; but indeed our guides were a full match for them. They began as ſoon as we were within hearing, and did not finiſh till we were got quite without reach of their voices, which they extended as much as they could. As it was all in Sicilian, we could make very little of it, but by the interpretation of our guides; however, we could not help admiring the volubility and natural elocution with which they ſpoke. This cuſtom is as old as the time of the Romans, and probably much older, as it is mentioned by Horace, and others of their authors. It is ſtill in vogue here as much as ever; the maſters encourage it; they think it gives them ſpirits, and makes the work go on more cheerfully; and I believe they are right; for it is amazing what pleaſure they ſeemed to take in it, and what laughing and merriment it occaſioned.

I for-

I forgot to mention that we paſſed the ſource of the famous cold river *(il fiume freddo)*. This is the river ſo celebrated by the poets in the fable of Acis and Galatea. It was here that Acis was ſuppoſed to have been killed by Polyphemus, and the gods, out of compaſſion, converted him into this river; which, as ſtill retaining the terrour inſpired by the dreadful voice of the Cyclops, runs with great rapidity, and about a mile from its ſource throws itſelf into the ſea. It riſes at once out of the earth a large ſtream. Its water is remarkably pure, and ſo extremely cold, that it is reckoned dangerous to drink it; but I am told it has likewiſe a poiſonous quality, which proceeds from its being impregnated with vitriol to ſuch a degree, that cattle have often been killed by it. It never freezes; but, what is remarkable, it is ſaid often to contract a degree of cold greater than that of ice.

Theſe

Theſe particulars I was informed of by the prieſts at Aci; which place, anciently called Aci Aquileia, and ſeveral others near it, Aci Caſtello, Aci Terra, &c. take their names from the unfortunate ſhepherd Acis.

A little to the eaſt of the river Acis, is the mouth of the river Alcantara, one of the moſt conſiderable in the iſland. It takes its riſe on the north ſide of Mount Ætna, and marks out the boundary of the mountain for about 60 miles. Its courſe has been ſtopped in many places by the eruptions of the volcano; ſo that, ſtrictly ſpeaking, the ſkirts of Ætna extend much beyond it; though it has generally been conſidered as the boundary. We paſſed it on our way to Piedmonte, over a large bridge built entirely of lava; and near to this the bed of the river is continued for a great way, through one of the moſt remarkable, and probably one of the moſt ancient lavas that ever run from Ætna. In many places the

current of the river, which is extremely rapid, has worn down the ſolid lava to the depth of 50 or 60 feet. Recupero, the gentleman I have mentioned, who is engaged in writing the natural hiſtory of Ætna, tells me, he had examined this lava with great attention, and he thinks that its courſe, including all its windings, is not leſs than 40 miles. It iſſued from a mountain on the north ſide of Ætna, and finding ſome valleys that lay to the eaſt, it took its courſe that way, interrupting the Alcantara in many places, and at laſt arrived at the ſea not far from the mouth of that river.

The city of Jaci or Aci, and indeed all the towns on this coaſt, are founded on immenſe rocks of lava, heaped one above another, in ſome places to an amazing height; for it appears that theſe flaming torrents, as ſoon as they arrived at the ſea, were hardened into rock, which not yielding

ing any longer to the preſſure of the liquid fire behind; the melted matter continuing to accumulate, formed a dam of fire, which, in a ſhort time, run over the ſolid front, pouring a ſecond torrent into the ocean: this was immediately conſolidated, and ſucceeded by a third, and ſo on.

Many of the places on this coaſt ſtill retain their ancient names; but the properties aſcribed to them by the ancients are now no more. The river Acis, which is now ſo poiſonous, was of old celebrated for the ſweetneſs and ſalubrity of its waters *; which Theocritus ſays, were ever held ſacred by the Sicilian ſhepherds.

We were ſurpriſed to find that ſo many places retained the name of this ſwain, who I imagined had never exiſted, but in the

* Quique per Ætnæos Acis petit æquora fines,
Et dulce gratum Nereide perluit unda. SIL. ITAL.

imagination of the poets: but the Sicilian authors ſay, that Acis was the name of a king who reigned in this part of the iſland in the time of the moſt remote antiquity; in confirmation of which, Maſſa gives the tranſlation of an inſcription found near Aci Caſtello †. He is ſaid to have been ſlain in a fit of jealouſy by Poliphemus, one of the giants of Ætna, which gave riſe to the fable. Anguillara, a Sicilian poet, in relating this ſtory, gives a tremendous idea of the voice of Poliphemus; the paſſage has been greatly admired.

" Tremor per troppo horrore Ætna; e Tifeo
" Fece maggior la fiamma uſcir del monte;

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† DIÆ
OGNIÆ, SATURNIÆ, ÆTNÆÆ,
DEORUM,
MARTI, FILIÆ, UXORI,
IN PORTU
SEPULCHRUM, TEMPLUM, ET ARCEM
ACIS,
FAUNI FILIUS, PICI NEPOS,
SATURNI PRONEPOS,
LATINI FRATER.

" E Pac-

" E Pacchino, e Peloro, e Lilibeo
" Quaſi attuffar nel mar l'altera fronte;
" Cadde il martel di man nel monte Ætnæo,
" All Re di Lenno, a Sterope, e a Bronte;
" Fugir fiere & augei di lor ricetto
" E ſi ſtrinſe ogni madre il figlio al petto."

You will obſerve, however, that the Sicilian poet cannot in juſtice claim the entire merit of theſe lines, as they are evidently borrowed from Virgil's deſcription of the ſound of the Fury Alecto's horn, in the 7th Æneid. The laſt line, perhaps the moſt beautiful of the whole, is almoſt word for word,

" Et trepidæ matres preſſere ad pectora natos."

It has been obſerved too, by ſome critics, that even this deſcription of Virgil is not his own, but copied from the account that Apollonius Rhodius gives of the roaring of the dragon that guarded the golden fleece; ſo that you ſee there is nothing new under the ſun. Rhodius probably ſtole it from

ſomebody elſe, and ſo on. Poets have ever been the greateſt of all thieves; and happy it is that poetical theft is no felony; otherwiſe, I am afraid, Parnaſſus would have been but thinly peopled.

Farewell: to-morrow I ſhall endeavour to bring you up with us; for at preſent you will pleaſe to obſerve, that you have got no farther than the city of Jaci; and have ſtill many extinguiſhed volcanos to paſs before your arrival here.

Ever yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

Catania, May 25th.

THE road from Jaci to this city is entirely over lava, and conſequently very fatiguing and troubleſome. Within a few miles of that place, we counted eight mountains formed by eruption, with every one its crater, from whence the burnt matter was diſcharged. Some of theſe are very high, and of a great compaſs. It appears evidently, that the eruptions of Mount Ætna have formed the whole of this coaſt, and in many places have driven back the ſea for ſeveral miles from its ancient boundary. The account the Sicilian authors give of the conflict betwixt theſe two adverſe elements is truly tremendous; and in relating it, they ſeem to have been ſhaken with horror. Conceive the front of a torrent of fire, ten miles in breadth, and

heaped up to an enormous height, rolling down the mountain, and pouring its flames into the ocean! The noiſe, they aſſure us, is infinitely more dreadful than the loudeſt thunder; and is heard through the whole country to an immenſe diſtance. The water ſeemed to retire and diminiſh before the fire, and to confeſs its ſuperiority; yielding up its poſſeſſions, and contracting its banks, to make room for its imperious maſter, who commands it: "Thus far "ſhalt thou come, and no farther.—The clouds of ſalt vapour darken the face of the ſun, covering up this ſcene, under a veil of horror and of night; and laying waſte every field and vineyard in theſe regions of the iſland. The whole fiſh on the coaſt are deſtroyed, the colour of the ſea itſelf is changed, and the tranſparency of its waters loſt for many months.

There are three rocks of lava at ſome little diſtance from ſhore, which Pliny takes frequent

quent notice of, and calls them the Three Cyclops. It is pretty ſingular, that they are ſtill diſtinguiſhed by the ſame name.

The fate of Catania has been very remarkable, and will ever appear fabulous. It is ſituated immediately at the foot of this great volcano, and has been ſeveral times deſtroyed by it: that indeed is not extraordinary; it would have been much more ſo had it eſcaped; but what I am going to relate, is a ſingularity that probably never happened to any city but itſelf. It was always in great want of a port, till by an eruption in the 16th century, and no doubt, by the interpoſition of St. Agatha, what was denied them by nature they received from the generoſity of the mountain. A ſtream of lava, running into the ſea, formed a mole which no expence could have furniſhed them. This laſted for ſome time a ſafe and commodious harbour, till at laſt, by a ſubſequent eruption, it was entirely filled

filled up and demoliſhed; ſo that probably the poor ſaint had ſunk much in her credit; for, at this unfortunate period, her miraculous veil, looked upon as the greateſt treaſure of Catania, and eſteemed an infallible remedy againſt earthquakes and volcanos, ſeems to have loſt its virtue. The torrent burſt over the walls, ſweeping away the images of every ſaint that were placed there to oppoſe it; and laying waſte great part of this beautiful city, poured into the ſea. However, the people ſay, that at that time they had given their ſaint very juſt provocation, but that ſhe has long ago been reconciled to them; and has promiſed never to ſuffer the mountain to get the better of them for the future. Many of them are ſo thoroughly convinced of this (for they are extremely ſuperſtitious) that I really believe if the lava were at their walls, they would not be at the pains to remove their effects. Neither is it the veil of St. Agatha alone, that they think poſſeſſed of this

this wonderful dominion over the mountain; but every thing that has touched that piece of ſacred attire, they ſuppoſe is impregnated in a leſſer degree with the ſame miraculous properties. Thus there are a number of little bits of cotton and linen fixed to the veil; which, after being bleſſed by the biſhop, are ſuppoſed to acquire power enough to ſave any perſon's houſe or garden; and wherever this expedient has failed, it is always aſcribed to the want of faith of the perſon, not any want of efficacy in the veil. However, they tell you many ſtories of theſe bits of cotton being fixed to the walls of houſes and vineyards, and preſerving them entirely from the conflagration.

On our arrival at Catania, we were amazed to find, that in ſo noble and beautiful a city, there was no ſuch thing as an inn. Our guides, indeed, conducted us to a houſe they called ſuch; but it was ſo wretchedly

wretchedly mean and dirty, that we were obliged to look out for other lodgings; and by the aſſiſtance of the Canonico Recupero, for whom he had letters, we ſoon found ourſelves comfortably lodged in a convent. The prince of Biſcaris (the governor of the place) a perſon of very great merit and diſtinction, returned our viſit this forenoon, and made us the moſt obliging offers.

Signor Recupero, who obligingly engages to be our Cicerone, has ſhewn us ſome curious remains of antiquity; but they have been all ſo ſhaken and ſhattered by the mountain, that hardly any thing is to be found entire.

Near to a vault, which is now thirty feet below ground, and has probably been a burial place, there is a draw-well, where there are ſeveral ſtrata of lavas, with earth to a conſiderable thickneſs over the ſurface of each ſtratum. Recupero has made uſe of this

this as an argument to prove the great antiquity of the eruptions of his mountain. For if it requires two thouſand years or upwards to form but a ſcanty ſoil on the ſurface of a lava, there muſt have heen more than that ſpace of time betwixt each of the eruptions which have formed theſe ſtrata. But what ſhall we ſay of a pit they ſunk near to Jaci, of a great depth? They pierced through ſeven diſtinct lavas one under the other, the ſurfaces of which were parallel, and moſt of them covered with a thick bed of rich earth. Now, ſays he, the eruption which formed the loweſt of theſe lavas, if we may be allowed to reaſon from analogy, muſt have flowed from the mountain at leaſt 14,000 years ago.

Recupero tells me, he is exceedingly embarraſſed by theſe diſcoveries in writing the hiſtory of the mountain.—That Moſes hangs like a dead weight upon him, and blunts all his zeal for inquiry; for that really he has

has not the conſcience to make his mountain ſo young as that prophet makes the world.—What do you think of theſe ſentiments from a Roman Catholic divine?—The biſhop, who is ſtrenuouſly orthodox—for it is an excellent ſee—has already warned him to be upon his guard, and not to pretend to be a better natural hiſtorian than Moſes; nor to preſume to urge any thing that may in the ſmalleſt degree be deemed contradictory to his ſacred authority. Adieu.

Ever yours.

LETTER VIII.

Catania, May 26th.

THIS morning we went to ſee the houſe and muſeum of the prince of Biſcaris; which, in antiques, is inferior to none I have ever ſeen, except that of the king of Naples at Portici. What adds greatly to the value of theſe is, that the prince himſelf has had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing moſt of them brought to light. He has dug them out of the ruins of the ancient theatre of Catania, at an incredible expence; but happily his pains have been amply repaid, by the number and variety of curious objects he has diſcovered. It would be endleſs to enter into an enumeration of them; even during our ſhort ſtay, we had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing part of a rich Corinthian cornice, and ſeveral pieces of ſtatues,

produced again to the light, after lying for ſo many ages in darkneſs and oblivion. His collection of medals, cameos, and intaglios is likewiſe very princely, and ſo are the articles in natural hiſtory: but the polite and amiable behaviour of the owner, gives more pleaſure than all his curioſities. He did not, oſtentatiouſly, like the prince of Villa Franca, tell us, that his houſe and carriages were at our command; but without any hint being given of it, we found his coach waiting at our door; and we ſhall probably be obliged to make uſe of it during our ſtay. His family conſiſts of the princeſs his wife, a ſon, and a daughter, who ſeem to emulate each other in benignity. They put me in mind of ſome happy families I have ſeen in our own country, but reſemble nothing we have yet met with on the continent. He is juſt now building a curious villa on a promontory formed by the lava of 1669. The ſpot where the houſe ſtands was formerly at leaſt 50 feet deep

deep of water; and the height of the lava above the preſent level of the ſea, is not leſs than 50 more.

This afternoon I walked out alone to examine the capricious forms and ſingular appearances that this deſtructive branch has aſſumed in laying waſte the country. I had not gone far when I ſpied a magnificent building at ſome diſtance, which ſeemed to ſtand on the higheſt part of it. My curioſity led me on, as I had heard no mention of any palace on this ſide of the city. On entering the great gate, my ſurpriſe was a good deal increaſed on obſerving a façade almoſt equal to that of Verſailles; a noble ſtaircaſe of white marble, and every thing that announced a royal magnificence. I had never heard that the kings of Sicily had a palace at Catania, and yet I could not account for what I ſaw in any other way. I thought the vaſt

front before me had been the whole of the palace; but conceive my amazement, when, on turning the corner, I found another front of equal greatneſs; and diſcovered that what I had ſeen was only one ſide of a ſquare.

I was no longer in doubt, well knowing that the church alone could be miſtreſs of ſuch magnificence. I haſtened home to communicate this diſcovery to my friends; when I found the Canonico Recupero already with them. He abuſed me exceedingly for preſuming to go out without our Cicerone, and declared he had never been ſo much diſappointed in his life; as he had come on purpoſe to carry us there, and to enjoy our ſurpriſe and aſtoniſhment. He then told us, that it was no other than a convent of fat Benedictine monks; who were determined to make ſure of a paradiſe, at leaſt in this world, if not in the other.

He

He added, that they were worth about 15,000l. a year; an immenſe ſum indeed for this country.

We went with Recupero to pay our reſpects to theſe ſons of humility, temperance, and mortification; and we muſt own, they received and entertained us with great civility and politeneſs, and even without oſtentation. Their muſeum is little inferior to that of the prince of Biſcaris, and the apartments that contain it are much more magnificent. But their garden is the greateſt curioſity: Although it be formed on the rugged and barren ſurface of the lava, it has a variety and a neatneſs ſeldom to be met with. The walks are broad, and paved with flints; and the trees and hedges (which by the by are in a bad taſte, and cut into a number of ridiculous ſhapes) thrive exceedingly. The whole ſoil muſt have been brought from a great diſtance, as the ſurface of this lava (only 150 years old)

is as hard and bare as a piece of iron. The church belonging to this convent, if finiſhed, would be one of the fineſt in Europe; but as it is founded on the ſurface of the porous and brittle lava, part of the foundation has given way to the preſſure of ſo huge a fabric; and ſeveral of the large arches that were intended to form the different chapels, have already fallen down. Only the weſt limb of the croſs (not a fifth of the whole) is finiſhed; and even this alone makes a very fine church. Here they have the fineſt organ I ever heard, even ſuperior, I think, to that at Harlem.

We went next to examine where the lava had ſcaled the walls of Catania. It muſt have been a noble ſight. The walls are 64 palms high (near 60 feet) and of a great ſtrength; otherwiſe they muſt have been borne down by the force of the flaming matter which roſe over this height, and ſeems to have mounted conſiderably above

above the top of the wall before it made its entry; at laſt it came down, ſweeping before it every ſaint in the calendar, who were drawn up in order of battle on purpoſe to oppoſe its paſſage; and marching on in triumph, annihilated, in a manner, every object that dared to oppoſe it. Amongſt other things, it covered up ſome fine fountains; one of which was ſo much eſteemed, that they have at a great expence pierced through the lava, and have now recovered their favourite ſpring. This excavation is a very curious work, and worthy of the attention of travellers.

Catania is looked upon as one of the moſt ancient cities in the iſland, or indeed in the world.—Their legends bear, that it was founded by the Cyclops, or giants of Ætna, ſuppoſed to have been the firſt inhabitants of Sicily after the deluge; and ſome of the Sicilian writers pretend that it was built by Deucalion and Pyrrha as ſoon

as the waters ſubſided, and they had got down again to the foot of the mountain. Its ancient name was Catetna, or the city of Ætna.

It is now reckoned the third city in the kingdom: though ſince Meſſina was deſtroyed by the plague, it may well be conſidered as the ſecond. It contains upwards of 30,000 inhabitants; has an univerſity, the only one in the iſland; and a biſhopric. The biſhop's revenues are conſiderable, and ariſe principally from the ſale of the ſnow on mount Ætna. One ſmall portion of which, lying on the north of the mountain, is ſaid to bring him in upwards of 1000*l.* a year; for Ætna furniſhes ſnow and ice, not only to the whole iſland of Sicily, but likewiſe to Malta, and a great part of Italy, and makes a very conſiderable branch of commerce; for even the peaſants in theſe hot countries regale themſelves with ices during the ſummer

ſummer heats; and there is no entertainment given by the nobility, of which theſe do not always make a principal part: a famine of ſnow, they themſelves ſay, would be more grievous, than a famine of either corn or wine. It is a common obſervation amongſt them, that without the ſnows of mount Ætna, their iſland could not be inhabited; ſo eſſential has this article of luxury become to them. But Ætna not only keeps them cool in ſummer, but likewiſe keeps them warm in winter; the fuel for the greateſt part of the iſland being carried from the immenſe and inexhauſtible foreſts of this volcano, and conſtitutes too, a very large branch of commerce.—But this amazing mountain perpetually carries me away from my ſubject; I was ſpeaking of this city.—What of it was ſpared by the eruption 1669, was totally ruined by the fatal earthquake 1693; when the greateſt part of its inhabitants were buried under the walls of their houſes and churches.

Yet, after ſuch repeated, and ſuch diſmal diſaſters, ſo ſtrange is their infatuation, that they never could be prevailed upon to change their ſituation. The whole city was ſoon rebuilt, after a new and an elegant plan, and is now much handſomer than ever. There is ſcarce any doubt, that in ſome future commotion of the mountain, it will be again laid in aſhes. But at preſent they are in perfect ſecurity: The Virgin and St. Agatha have both engaged to protect them; and under their banner they hold Ætna, with all the devils it contains, at defiance.

There are many remains of antiquity in this city, but indeed moſt of them are in a very ruinous ſtate. One of the moſt remarkable is an elephant of lava, with an obeliſk of Egyptian granite on his back. There are likewiſe conſiderable remains of a great theatre, beſides the one belonging to the prince of Biſcaris; a large

large bath almoſt entire; the ruins of the great aqueduct, 18 miles long; the ruins of ſeveral temples, one of Ceres, another of Vulcan: The church called *Bocca di Fuoco* was likewiſe a temple. But the moſt entire of all, is a ſmall rotundo, which, as well as the pantheon at Rome, and ſome others to be met with in Italy, in my opinion, demonſtrates that form to be the moſt durable of any.

It has now been purged and purified from all the infection contracted from the heathen rites, and is become a chriſtian church, dedicated to the bleſſed Virgin; who has long been conſtituted univerſal legatee, and executrix to all the ancient goddeſſes, celeſtial, terreſtrial, and infernal: and, indeed, little more than the names are changed, the things continuing pretty much the ſame as ever.—The Catholics themſelves do not attend to it: but it is not a little curious to conſider, how ſmall is the deviation

deviation in almoſt every article of their preſent rites from thoſe of the ancients. I have ſomewhere ſeen an obſervation, which ſeems to be a juſt one: That during the long reign of heatheniſm, ſuperſtition had altogether exhauſted her talent for invention; ſo that when a ſuperſtitious ſpirit ſeized chriſtians, they were under a neceſſity of borrowing from their predeceſſors, and imitating ſome part of their idolatry. This appears to be ſtrictly the caſe. I took notice of it to Signor R——, who is not the moſt zealous ſectary in the world, and who frankly owned the truth of the obſervation.

In ſome places the very ſame images ſtill remain: They have only chriſtened them; and what was Venus or Proſerpine, is now Mary Magdalene, or the Virgin. The ſame ceremonies are daily performed before theſe images; in the ſame language, and nearly in the ſame manner. The ſaints are per-

petually coming down in perſon, and working miracles, as the heathen gods did of old. The walls of the temples are covered with the vows of pilgrims, as they were formerly. The holy water, which was held in ſuch deteſtation by the firſt chriſtians, is again revered, and ſprinkled about with the ſame devotion as in the time of paganiſm. The ſame incenſe is burnt, by prieſts arrayed in the ſame manner, with the ſame grimaces and genuflections, before the ſame images, and in the ſame temples too. In ſhort, ſo nearly do the rites coincide, that were the pagan high-prieſt to come back, and re-aſſume his functions, he would only have to learn a few new names: to get the Maſs, the Paters, and the Aves by heart; which would be much eaſier to him, as they are in a language he underſtands, but which his modern ſucceſſors are often ignorant of. Some things, to be ſure, would puzzle him; and he would ſwear that all the myſteries

myſteries of Eleuſis were nothing to the amazing myſtery of tranſubſtantiation; the only one that ever attempted to ſet both our underſtanding and our ſenſes at defiance, and baffles equally all the faculties both of the ſoul and body. —He would, likewiſe, be a good deal at a loſs to account for the ſtrange metamorphoſis of ſome of his old friends. That (he would ſay) I can well remember, was the ſtatue of Venus Meretrix, and was only worſhipped by the looſe and voluptuous. She ſeems to be wonderfully improved ſince you made her a chriſtian; for I find ſhe is now become the great protectreſs of chaſtity and of virtue.——Juno too, who was ſo implacable and ſo revengeful, you have ſoftened down into a very moderate ſort of deity; for I obſerve you addreſs her with as little fear or ceremony as any of the reſt of them; I wiſh you would make the Furies chriſtians too, for ſurely they would be much the

the better for it.—But obſerving the figure of St. Anthony, he would exclaim with aſtoniſhment.—But what do I behold!—Jupiter, the ſovereign of gods and men, with a ragged cloak over his ſhoulders! What a humiliating ſpectacle! Well do I remember, with what awe we bent before that once reſpectable image. But what has become of the thunderbolt, which he held in his hand to chaſtiſe the world; and what is that he has got in its place? His conductor would tell him, that it was only a piece of rope, with knots upon it, to chaſtiſe himſelf; adding, that he was now doing pennance for his long uſurpation; and that the thunder had long ago been put into better hands.—However, he would ſoon find, that even theſe ſaints ſometimes change their names, according to the enthuſiaſtic caprice of the people; and from this verſatility, he would ſtill be in hopes, in proceſs of time, to ſee his friend Jupiter re-aſſume his bolt and his dignity.

Do you remember old Huet,—the greateſt of all originals? One day, as he paſſed the ſtatue of Jupiter in the capitol, he pulled off his hat, and made him a bow.—A jacobite gentleman, who obſerved it, aſked him why he paid ſo much reſpect to that old gentleman.—For the ſame reaſon, replied Huet, that you pay ſo much to the Pretender. Beſides, added he, I think there is rather a greater probability that his turn will come round again, than that of your hero; I ſhall therefore endeavour to keep well with him, and hope he will never forget that I took notice of him in the time of his adverſity.

Indeed, within the courſe of my own obſervation, I can recollect ſome of the moſt capital ſaints in the calendar, who have been diſgraced by the people, and new names given to their ſtatues. When we were in Portugal laſt war, the people of Caſtel Branco were ſo enraged at St. Antonio,

tonio, for allowing the Spaniards to plunder their town, contrary, as they affirmed, to his expreſs agreement with them, that they broke many of his ſtatues to pieces; and one that had been more revered than the reſt, they took the head off, and clapped on one of St. Francis in its place; whoſe name the ſtatue ever after retained. Even the great St. Januarius himſelf, I am told, was in imminent danger during the laſt famine at Naples. A Swiſs gentleman aſſured me, that he had heard them load him with abuſe and invective; and declared point-blank, that if he did not procure them corn by ſuch a time, he ſhould no longer be their ſaint. However, ſuch inſtances are but rare; and in general the poor catholics are fully indemnified for theſe ſudden fits of paſſion and reſentment, from the full perſuaſion of the immediate preſence and protection of their beloved patrons.

I have

I have obſerved, with pleaſure, that glow of gratitude and affection that has animated their countenances; and am perſuaded that the warmth of enthuſiaſtic devotion they often feel before their favourite ſaints, particularly their female ones, muſt have ſomething extremely delightful in it; reſembling, perhaps, the pure and delicate ſenſations of the moſt reſpectful love. I own I have ſometimes envied them their feelings; and in my heart curſed the pride of reaſon and philoſophy, with all its cool and taſteleſs triumphs, that lulls into a kind of ſtoical apathy theſe moſt exquiſite ſenſations of the ſoul. Who would not chuſe to be deceived, when the deception raiſes in him theſe delicious paſſions, that are ſo worthy of the human heart; and for which, of all others, it ſeems to be the moſt fitted? But if once you have ſteeled it over with the hard and impenetrable temper of philoſophy; theſe fine-ſpun threads of weakneſs and affection,

faction, that were ſo pliable, and ſo eaſily tied, become hard and inflexible; and for ever loſe that delicate tone of ſenſibility that put them into a kind of uniſon and vibration with every object around us: For it is certainly true, what has been ſaid of one part of our ſpecies, and may almoſt with equal juſtice be applied to the whole,

"That to their weakneſs half their charms we owe."

I remember Doctor Tiſſot told me, he had a patient that actually died of love for Chriſt; and when in the laſt extremity, ſeemed ſtill to enjoy the greateſt happineſs; calling upon him with all the fondneſs of the moſt enthuſiaſtic paſſion. And from what I have often obſerved before the ſtatues of the Virgin and St. Agatha, I am perſuaded, they have many inamoratos that would willingly lay down their lives for them.

Now, pray don't you think too, that this perſonal kind of worſhip is much better adapted to the capacities of the vulgar, than the more pure and ſublime modes of it, which would only diſtract and confound their ſimple underſtandings, unaccuſtomed to ſpeculation; and that certainly require ſomething groſs and material, ſome object of ſenſe to fix their attention?—This even ſeems to have been the opinion of ſome of the ſacred writers, who often repreſent God under ſome material form.

Were you to attempt to give a country-fellow an idea of the deity; were you to tell him of a being that is immaterial, and yet whoſe eſſence penetrates all matter; who has exiſted from all eternity, and whoſe extenſion is equally boundleſs with his duration; who fills and pervades millions of worlds, and animates every object they contain; and who, in the ſublime language of our poet,

" Tho'

" Tho' chang'd thro' all, is yet in all the ſame,
" Great in the earth, as in th' ætherial frame:
" Warms in the ſun, refreſhes in the breeze,
" Glows in the ſtars, and bloſſoms in the trees;
" Lives thro' all life, extends thro' all extent;
" Spreads undivided, operates unſpent.
" To him no high, no low, no great, no ſmall;
" He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all."

Now, what do you imagine he would think of ſuch a being? I am afraid his underſtanding would be ſo bewildered, that he could not think at all. But ſet up before him the figure of a fine woman, with a beautiful child in her arms, the moſt intereſting object in nature; and tell him ſhe can procure him every thing he wants; he knows perfectly well what he is about; feels himſelf animated by the object, and prays to her with all his might.

Adieu.—We are going to be very buſy; and are preparing every thing for one of the greateſt objects of our expedition; the examination of mount Ætna. Indeed, we

have received but bad encouragement; and are beginning to doubt of the poſſibility of ſucceſs. Recupero tells us, that the ſeaſon is not far enough advanced yet, by ſome months; and that he does not think it will be poſſible to get near the ſummit of the mountain. The laſt winter, he ſays, was ſo uncommonly ſevere, that the circle of ſnow extended much nearer the foot of the mountain than uſual; that although this circle is now greatly contracted, it ſtill extends nine or ten miles below the crater.—He adviſes us to return this way in the month of Auguſt; and, if poſſible, make Ætna the laſt part of our expedition. If we do not ſucceed to-morrow, we ſhall probably follow his advice; but we are all determined to make a bold puſh for it. The weather is the moſt favourable that can be imagined: Here is a delightful evening; and by the ſtar-light we can obſerve the ſmoke rolling down the ſide of the mountain like a vaſt torrent. Recupero ſays,

this

this is a ſure indication of the violence of the cold in theſe exalted regions of the atmoſphere, which condenſes the vapour, and makes it fall down, the moment it iſſues out of the crater. He adviſes us, by all means, to provide plenty of *liqueurs*, warm fur cloaks, and hatchets to cut wood; as we ſhall probably be obliged to paſs the night in the open air, in a climate, he aſſures us, as cold as that of Greenland. It is very ſingular if this be true; for at preſent we are melting with heat, in thin ſuits of taffeta. Adieu. You ſhall know it all on our return, if we do not ſhare the fate of Empedocles.

Ever yours.

LETTER IX.

Catania, May 29.

ON the 27th, by day-break, we ſet off to viſit mount Ætna, that venerable and reſpectable father of mountains. His baſe, and his immenſe declivities, are covered over with a numerous progeny of his own; for every great eruption produces a new mountain; and perhaps, by the number of theſe, better than by any other method, the number of eruptions, and the age of Ætna itſelf, might be aſcertained.

The whole mountain is divided into three diſtinct regions, called *La Regione Culta*, or *Piedmonteſe*, The Fertile Region; *La Regione Sylvoſa*, or *Nemoroſa*, The Woody Region; and *La Regione Deſerta*, or *Scoperta*, The Barren Region.

Theſe

Theſe three are as different, both in climate and productions, as the three zones of the earth; and perhaps, with equal propriety, might have been ſtyled the Torrid, the Temperate, and the Frigid zone. The firſt region ſurrounds the foot of the mountain, and conſtitutes the moſt fertile country in the world on all ſides of it, to the extent of about fourteen or fifteen miles, where the woody region begins. It is compoſed almoſt entirely of lava, which, after a number of ages, is at laſt converted into the moſt fertile of all ſoils.

At Nicoloſi, which is twelve miles up the mountain, we found the barometer at 27: $1\frac{1}{2}$; at Catania it ſtood at 29: $8\frac{1}{2}$; although the former elevation is not very great, probably not exceeding 3000 feet, yet the climate was totally changed. At Catania the harveſt was entirely over, and the heats were inſupportable; here they were moderate, and in many places the

corn is as yet green. The road for theſe twelve miles is the worſt I ever travelled; entirely over old lavas and the mouths of extinguiſhed volcanos, now converted into corn-fields, vineyards, and orchards.

The fruit of this region is reckoned the fineſt in Sicily, particularly the figs, of which they have a great variety. One of theſe of a very large ſize, eſteemed ſuperior in flavour to all the reſt, they pretend is peculiar to Ætna.

The lavas, which as I have already ſaid form this region of the mountain, take their riſe from an infinite number of the moſt beautiful little mountains on earth, which are every where ſcattered on the immenſe declivity of Ætna. Theſe are all of a regular figure; either that of a cone, or a ſemiſphere; and all but a very few are covered with beautiful trees, and the richeſt verdure: Every eruption [illegible]ly forms one

one of theſe mountains. As the great crater of Ætna itſelf is raiſed to ſuch an enormous height above the lower regions of the mountain, it is not poſſible, that the internal fire raging for a vent, even round the baſe, and no doubt vaſtly below it, ſhould be carried to the height of twelve or thirteen thouſand feet, for probably ſo high is the ſummit of Ætna. It has therefore generally happened, that after ſhaking the mountain and its neighbourhood for ſome time, it at laſt burſts open its ſide, and this is called an eruption. At firſt it only ſends forth a thick ſmoke and ſhowers of aſhes, that lay waſte the adjacent country: Theſe are ſoon followed by red hot ſtones, and rocks of a great ſize, thrown to an immenſe height in the air. The fall of theſe ſtones, together with the quantities of aſhes diſcharged at the ſame time, at laſt form the ſpherical and conical mountains I have mentioned. Sometimes this proceſs is finiſhed in the courſe of a few days; ſometimes

times it laſts for months, which was the caſe in the great eruption 1669. In that caſe, the mountain formed is of a great ſize; ſome of them are not leſs than ſeven or eight miles round, and upwards of 1000 feet in perpendicular height; others are not more than two or three miles round, and 3 or 400 feet high.

After the new mountain is formed, the lava generally burſts out from its lower ſide; and bearing every thing before it, is for the moſt part terminated by the ſea. This is the common progreſs of an eruption; however, it ſometimes happens, though rarely, that the lava burſts at once from the ſide of the mountain, without all theſe attending circumſtances; and this is commonly the caſe with the eruptions of Veſuvius, where the elevation being ſo much ſmaller, the melted matter is generally carried up into the crater of the mountain, which then exhibits the phænomena I have deſcribed;

deſcribed; diſcharging ſhowers of ſtones and aſhes from the mouth of the volcano, without forming any new mountain, but only adding conſiderably to the height of the old one; till at laſt the lava, riſing near the ſummit, burſts the ſide of the crater, and the eruption is declared. This has literally been the caſe with two eruptions I have been an attentive witneſs of in that mountain; but Ætna is upon a much larger ſcale, and one crater is not enough to give vent to ſuch oceans of liquid fire.

Recupero aſſures me, he ſaw in an eruption of that mountain large rocks of fire diſcharged to the height of ſome thouſand feet, with a noiſe much more terrible than that of thunder. He meaſured from the time of their greateſt elevation till they reached the ground, and found they took twenty-one ſeconds to deſcend; which, according to the rule of the ſpaces, being as

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the ſquares of the times, amounts, I think, to upwards of 7000 feet. A moſt aſtoniſhing height ſurely, and requiring a force of projection beyond what we have any conception of. I meaſured the height of the exploſions of Veſuvius by the ſame rule, and never obſerved any of the ſtones thrown from it to take more than nine ſeconds to deſcend, which ſhews they had riſen to little more than 1200 feet.

Our landlord at Nicoloſi gave us an account of the ſingular fate of the beautiful country near Hybla, at no great diſtance from hence. It was ſo celebrated for its fertility, and particularly for its honey, that it was called Mel Paſſi, till it was overwhelmed by the lava of Ætna; and having then become totally barren, by a kind of pun its name was changed to Mal Paſſi. In a ſecond eruption, by a ſhower of aſhes from the mountain, it ſoon re-aſſumed its

ancient

ancient beauty and fertility; and for many years was called Bel Paſſi. Laſt of all, in the unfortunate æra of 1669, it was again laid under an ocean of fire, and reduced to the moſt wretched ſterility, ſince which time it is known again by its ſecond appellation of Mal Paſſi. However, the lava, in its courſe over this beautiful country, has left ſeveral little iſlands or hillocks; juſt enough to ſhew what it formerly was. Theſe make a ſingular appearance, in all the bloom of the moſt luxuriant vegetation, ſurrounded and rendered almoſt inacceſſible by large fields of black and rugged lava. The mountain from whence the firſt eruption iſſued, that covered the Mel Paſſi, is known by the name of Monpelieri; I was ſtruck with its beautiful appearance at a diſtance, and could not reſiſt the deſire I had of examining it minutely, as well as of obſerving the effects of the two eruptions that overwhelmed this celebrated country.

Mon-

Monpelieri is rather of a ſpherical than a conical ſhape, and does not riſe in perpendicular height above 300 feet, but it is ſo perfectly regular on every ſide, and ſo richly overſpread with fruits and flowers, that I could not leave ſo heavenly a ſpot without the greateſt regret. Its cup or crater is large in proportion to the mountain, and is as exactly hollowed out as the beſt made bowl. I walked quite round its outward edge, and think the circumference muſt be ſomewhat more than a mile.

This mountain was formed by the firſt eruption that deſtroyed the country of Mel Paſſi, and is of a very old date. It buried a great number of villages and country houſes; and particularly two noble churches, which are more regretted than all the reſt, on account of three ſtatues, reckoned at that time the moſt perfect in the iſland. They have attempted, but in vain, to recover them; as the ſpot where the churches

ſtood

ſtood could never be juſtly aſcertained. Indeed it is impoſſible it ſhould; for theſe churches were built of lava, which it is well known is immediately melted, when it comes into contact with a torrent of new erupted matter: And Maſſa ſays, that in ſome eruptions of Ætna, the lava has poured down with ſuch a ſudden impetuoſity, that in the courſe of a few hours, churches, palaces, and villages, have been entirely melted down, and the whole run off in fuſion, without leaving the leaſt mark of their former exiſtence. But if the lava has had any conſiderable time to cool, this ſingular effect never happens.

The great eruption of 1669, after ſhaking the whole country around for four months, and forming a very large mountain of ſtones and aſhes, burſt out about a mile above Monpelieri, and deſcending like a torrent, bore directly againſt the middle of that mountain, and (they pretend) perfo-

rated it from ſide to ſide: this however I doubt, as it muſt have broken the regular form of the mountain, which is not the caſe. But certain it is, that it pierced it to a great depth. The lava then divided into two branches; and ſurrounding this mountain, joined again on its ſouth ſide; and laying waſte the whole country betwixt that and Catania, ſcaled the walls of that city, and poured its flaming torrent into the ocean. In its way, it is ſaid to have deſtroyed the poſſeſſions of near 30,000 people, and reduced them to beggary. It formed ſeveral hills where there were formerly valleys, and filled up a large lake, of which there is not now the leaſt veſtige to be ſeen.

As the events of this eruption are better known than any other, they tell a great many ſingular ſtories of it; one of which, however incredible it may appear, is well aſcertained. A vineyard, belonging to a convent

convent of Jeſuits, lay directly in its way. This vineyard was formed on an ancient lava, probably a thin one, with a number of caverns and crevices under it. The liquid lava entering into theſe caverns, ſoon filled them up, and by degrees bore up the vineyard; and the Jeſuits, who every moment expected to ſee it buried, beheld with amazement the whole field begin to move off. It was carried on the ſurface of the lava to a conſiderable diſtance; and though the greateſt part was deſtroyed, yet ſome of it remains to this day.

We went to examine the mouth from whence this dreadful torrent iſſued; and were ſurpriſed to find it only a ſmall hole, of about three or four yards diameter. The mountain from whence it ſprung, I think is little leſs than the conical part of Veſuvius.

There is a vaſt cavern on the oppoſite ſide of it, where people go to ſhoot wild

pigeons, which breed there in great abundance. The innermoſt parts of this cavern are ſo very diſmal and gloomy, that our landlord told us ſome people had loſt their ſenſes from having advanced too far, imagining they ſaw devils and the ſpirits of the damned; for it is ſtill very generally believed here, that Ætna is the mouth of hell.

We found a degree of wildneſs and ferocity in the inhabitants of this mountain, that I have not obſerved any where elſe. It put me in mind of an obſervation the Padre della Torre (the hiſtoriographer of mount Veſuvius) told me he had often made in the confines of Naples; that in the places where the air is moſt impregnated with ſulphur and hot exhalations, the people were always moſt wicked and vicious. Whatever truth there may be in the obſervation, the people about Nicoloſi at leaſt ſeem to confirm it. The whole village

flocked round us, and the women in particular abuſed us exceedingly; the cauſe of which we at laſt found was, that F——'s blooming complexion and white ſkin had made them take him for one of their own ſex. They made a great clamour, and it was with difficulty we could appeaſe them. The perſon whom Recupero had appointed to accompany us, known by the name of the Cyclops (the man in the iſland that is beſt acquainted with mount Ætna), was ordered by them not to go with us; and if we had not at laſt obtained their conſent by ſoothing and flattery, the beſt method with women, he durſt not have diſobeyed them. At firſt we had been obliged to ſhut the gate of the court, they were ſo very noiſy and tumultuous; but when our landlord (a prieſt), for whom we had letters from Catania, aſſured them that we were Chriſtians, and came with no bad intentions, they became more moderate, and we ventured out amongſt them.—This con-

fidence ſoon acquired theirs; and in a ſhort time we became good friends, and had a great deal of converſation.

It was with much difficulty I could perſuade them that we were not come to ſearch for hidden treaſures, a great quantity of which they believe is to be found in Monpelieri; and when I went to that mountain they were then fully convinced that this was our intention. Two of the men followed me, and kept a cloſe eye on every ſtep that I took; and when I lifted any bit of lava or pumice, they came running up, thinking it was ſomething very precious; but when they obſerved they were only bits of ſtone, and that I put them into my pocket, they laughed heartily, talking to one another in their mountain jargon, which is unintelligible even to Italians. However, as moſt of them ſpeak Italian ſo as to be underſtood, they aſked me what I was going to make of thoſe bits of ſtone? I told

I told them they were of great value in our country; that the people there had a way of making gold of them: At this they both ſeemed exceedingly ſurpriſed, and ſpoke again in their own tongue. However, I found they did not believe me; one of them told me, if that had been true, I certainly would not have been ſo ready in telling it: But, ſaid he, if it is ſo, we will ſerve you for ever, if you will teach us that art; for then we ſhall be the richeſt people on earth. I aſſured them that I had not yet learned it myſelf, and that it was a ſecret known only to very few. They were likewiſe a good deal ſurpriſed to ſee me pull out of my pocket a magnetical needle and a ſmall electrometer, which I had prepared at Catania to examine the electrical ſtate of the air; and I was at firſt afraid they ſhould have taken me for a conjuror (which you know already happened amongſt the Appenines), but luckily that idea did not ſtrike them.

On our way back to Nicoloſi we were joined by three or four more, with their wives. I began to be a little afraid of myſelf, leſt they ſhould inſiſt on knowing the ſecret. However, I took out my bits of lava, and told them they were at their ſervice, if they had any occaſion for them. But they refuſed them, ſaying, they wiſhed to the Virgin and St. Agatha, that I could take away the whole of it; as it had ruined the fineſt country in all Sicily.

One fellow, who aſſumed an air of ſuperior wiſdom and dignity to the reſt, made them form a circle round him, and began to interrogate me with great gravity and compoſure. It was with difficulty I could keep my countenance; but as I was alone with them, at ſome diſtance from the village, I was afraid of offending. He deſired me to anſwer him with truth and preciſion, what were the real motives of our coming ſo fatiguing and diſagreeable a journey?

journey? I told him, on my word, that we had no other motive but curioſity to examine mount Ætna. On which, laughing to one another with great contempt; *Un bel ragione queſto, non é vero*, ſaid they; (a very pretty reaſon truly.) The old fellow then aſked me what country we were of. I told him, we were *Ingleſe*. *E dove loro paeſe?* ſaid he; whereabouts does their country lie? I told him it was a great way off, on the other ſide of the world. *Da vero*, ſaid the fellow,—*e credono in Chriſto quelli Ingleſe?*—I told him (laughing) that they did. Ah, ſaid he, ſhaking his head, *mi pare che non credono troppo.*—One of the company then obſerved, that he remembered ſeveral of theſe Ingleſe, that, at different times, had paid viſits to mount Ætna, and that they never yet could find out their motive; but that he recollected very well, to have heard many of their old people ſay, that the Ingleſe had a queen that had burnt in the mountain for many years paſt; and

that they ſuppoſed theſe viſits were made from ſome devotion or reſpect to her memory. I aſſured them that the Ingleſe had but too little reſpect for their queens when they were alive, but that they never troubled themſelves about them after they were dead: however, as all the others confirmed this teſtimony, I thought it was beſt to ſay little againſt it; but I was extremely curious to know who this queen might be. They alleged that I knew much better than they; but added, that her name was Anna.

I could not conceive what queen Anne had done to bring her there; and was puzzling myſelf to find it out, when one of them ſoon cleared up the matter; he told me ſhe was wife to a king that had been a Chriſtian, and that ſhe had made him an Heretic, and was in conſequence condemned to burn for ever in mount Ætna. In ſhort, I found it was no other than poor Anne Boloyne. As ſoon as I mentioned

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the name, *Si ſignor*, ſaid the fellow, *l'iſteſſa*, *l'iſteſſa*, *la connoſce meglio che noi.* I aſked, if her huſband was there too, for that he deſerved it much better than ſhe: *ſicuro*, ſaid he, and all his heretic ſubjects too; and if you are of that number, you need not be in ſuch a hurry to get thither, you will be ſure of it at laſt. I thanked him, and went to join our company, not a little amuſed with the converſation.

We ſoon after left Nicoloſi, and in an hour and a half's travelling, over barren aſhes and lava, we arrived on the confines of the Regione Sylvoſa, or the Temperate Zone. As ſoon as we entered theſe delightful foreſts, we ſeemed to have got into another world. The air, which before was ſultry and hot, was now cool and refreſhing; and every breeze was loaded with a thouſand perfumes, the whole ground being covered over with the richeſt aromatic plants. Many parts of this region are ſurely the

the moſt heavenly ſpots upon earth; and if Ætna reſembles hell within, it may with equal juſtice be ſaid to reſemble paradiſe without.

It is indeed a curious conſideration, that this mountain ſhould reunite every beauty and every horrour; and, in ſhort, all the moſt oppoſite and diſſimilar objects in nature. Here you obſerve a gulph, that formerly threw out torrents of fire, now covered with the moſt luxuriant vegetation; and from an object of terrour, become one of delight. Here you gather the moſt delicious fruit, riſing from what was but lately a black and barren rock. Here the ground is covered with every flower; and we wander over theſe beauties, and contemplate this wilderneſs of ſweets, without conſidering that hell, with all its terrours, is immediately under our feet; and that but a few yards ſeparate us from lakes of liquid fire and brimſtone.

But

But our aſtoniſhment ſtill increaſes, on caſting our eyes on the higher regions of the mountain. There we behold, in perpetual union, the two elements that are at perpetual war; an immenſe gulph of fire, for ever exiſting in the midſt of ſnows which it has not power to melt; and immenſe fields of ſnow and ice for ever ſurrounding this gulph of fire, which they have not power to extinguiſh.

The woody region of Ætna aſcends for about eight or nine miles, and forms a zone or girdle, of the brighteſt green, all around the mountain. This night we paſſed through little more than the half of it; arriving ſome time before ſun-ſet at our lodgings, which was no other than a large cave, formed by one of the moſt ancient and venerable lavas. It is called *La Spelonca dal Capriole*, or the goats cavern, becauſe frequented by thoſe animals; who take refuge there in bad weather.

Here

Here we were delighted with the contemplation of many grave and beautiful objects; the proſpect on all ſides is immenſe; and we already ſeem to be lifted up from the earth, and to have got into a new world.

Our cavern is ſurrounded by the moſt ſtately and majeſtic oaks; of the dry leaves of which, we made very comfortable beds; and with our hatchets, which we had brought on purpoſe, we had cut down great branches, and, in a ſhort time, had a fire large enough to roaſt an ox. I obſerved my thermometer, and found, from 71 at Nicoloſi, it had now fallen below 60. The barometer ſtood at 24: 2. In one end of our cave we ſtill found a great quantity of ſnow, which ſeemed to be ſent there on purpoſe for us, as there was no water to be found. With this we filled our tea-kettle, as tea and bread and butter was the only ſupper we had provided; and probably the beſt

beſt one to prevent us from being overcome by ſleep or fatigue.

Not a great way from this cavern, are two of the moſt beautiful mountains of all that number that ſpring from Ætna. I mounted one of our beſt mules, and with a good deal of difficulty arrived at the ſummit of the higheſt of them, juſt a little before ſun-ſet. The proſpect of Sicily, with the ſurrounding ſea and all its iſlands, was wonderfully noble. The whole courſe of the river Semetus, the ruins of Hybla, and ſeveral other ancient towns; the rich corn-fields and vineyards on the lower region of the mountain, and the amazing number of beautiful mountains below, made a delightful ſcene. The hollow craters of theſe two mountains are each of them conſiderably larger than that of Veſuvius. They are now filled with ſtately oaks, and covered to a great depth with the richeſt ſoil. I obſerved that this region

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of Ætna, like the former, is compoſed of lava; but this is now covered ſo deep with earth, that it is no where to be ſeen, but in the beds of the torrents. In many of theſe it is worn down by the water to the depth of fifty or ſixty feet, and in one of them ſtill conſiderably more.—What an idea does not this give of the amazing antiquity of the eruptions of this mountain!

As ſoon as it was dark we retired to our cave, and took poſſeſſion of our bed of leaves. Our reſt, however, was ſomewhat diſturbed by the noiſe of a mountain that lay a good way off on our right. It diſcharged quantities of ſmoke, and made ſeveral exploſions like heavy cannon at a diſtance; but what is ſingular, we could obſerve no appearance of fire.—This mountain was formed by an eruption in 1766, now upwards of four years ago; the fire of which is not yet extinguiſhed, neither is the lava by any means cold. This lava

ſpent

ſpent its fury on a delightful foreſt, which it laid waſte to the extent of a good many miles. In many places it has run into gullies of a great depth, which it has filled up, to the height, we are told, of 200 feet. It is in theſe places where it retains the greateſt heat. On our road to-day we ſcrambled up this lava, and went a conſiderable way over its ſurface, which appeared perfectly cold; but it is certain, that in many places it ſtill emits volumes of ſmoke, particularly after rain; and the people ſay, what I can readily believe, that this will continue to be the caſe for ſome years, where the lava is thickeſt. A ſolid body of fire ſome hundreds of feet thick, and of ſo great an extent, muſt certainly retain its heat for many years. The ſurface indeed ſoon becomes black and hard, and incloſes the liquid fire within, in a kind of ſolid box, excluding all impreſſions from the external air or from the weather. Thus I have ſeen, many months after

eruptions

eruptions of mount Veſuvius, a bed of lava, though only of a few feet thick, has continued red hot in the center long after the ſurface was cold; and a ſtick thruſt into its crevices, inſtantly took fire, although there was no perceptible heat without.

Maſſa, a Sicilian author of credit, ſays, he was at Catania eight years after the great eruption in 1669, and that he ſtill found the lava in many places was not cold: But there is an eaſy method of calculating the time that bodies take to cool:—Sir Iſaac Newton, I think, in his account of the comet of 1680, ſuppoſes the times to be as the ſquares of their diameters; and finding that a ſolid ball of metal of two inches, made red hot, required upwards of an hour to become perfectly cold, made the calculation from that to a body of the diameter of the earth, and found it would require upwards of twenty thouſand years. If this rule be juſt, you may eaſily compute the

the time that the lava will take to become thoroughly cold; and that you may have time to do ſo, I ſhall here break off my letter, which I am obliged to write in bed, in a very awkward and diſagreeable poſture; the cauſe of which ſhall be explained to you in my next. Adieu.

Ever yours.

LETTER X.

Catania, May 29th, at night.

AFTER getting a comfortable nap on our bed of leaves in the Spelonca del Capriole, we awoke about eleven o'clock; and melting down a ſufficient quantity of ſnow, we boiled our tea-kettle, and made a hearty meal, to prepare us for the remaining part of our expedition. We were nine in number; for we had our three ſervants, the Cyclops (our conductor), and two men to take care of our mules. The Cyclops now began to diſplay his great knowledge of the mountain, and we followed him with implicit confidence. He conducted us over "Antres vaſt and De-" ſerts wild," where ſcarce human foot had ever trod. Sometimes through gloomy foreſts, which by day-light were delight-

ful; but now, from the univerſal darkneſs, the ruſtling of the trees; the heavy, dull, bellowing of the mountain; the vaſt expanſe of ocean ſtretched at an immenſe diſtance below us; inſpired a kind of awful horror. Sometimes we found ourſelves aſcending great rocks of lava, where, if our mules ſhould make but a falſe ſtep, we might be thrown headlong over the precipice. However, by the aſſiſtance of the Cyclops, we overcame all theſe difficulties; and he managed matters ſo well, that in the ſpace of two hours we found we had got above the regions of vegetation; and had left the foreſts of Ætna far behind. Theſe appeared now like a dark and gloomy gulph below us, that ſurrounded the mountain.

The proſpect before us was of a very different nature; we beheld an expanſe of ſnow and ice that alarmed us exceedingly, and almoſt ſtaggered our reſolution. In

the center of this, but ſtill at a great diſtance, we deſcried the high ſummit of the mountain, rearing its tremendous head, and vomiting out torrents of ſmoke. It indeed appeared altogether inacceſſible, from the vaſt extent of the fields of ſnow and ice that ſurrounded it. Our diffidence was ſtill increaſed by the ſentiments of the Cyclops. He told us, it often happened, that the ſurface of the mountain being hot below, melted the ſnow in particular ſpots, and formed pools of water, where it was impoſſible to foreſee our danger; that it likewiſe happened, that the ſurface of the water, as well as the ſnow, was ſometimes covered with black aſhes, that rendered it exceedingly deceitful; that however, if we thought proper, he would lead us on with as much caution as poſſible. Accordingly, after holding a council of war, which you know people generally do when they are very much afraid, we detached our cavalry to the foreſt below, and prepared to climb

the ſnows. The Cyclops, after taking a great draught of brandy, deſired us to be of good cheer; that we had plenty of time, and might take as many reſts as we pleaſed. That the ſnow could be little more than ſeven miles, and that we certainly ſhould be able to paſs it before ſun-riſe. Accordingly, taking each of us a dram of liqueur, which ſoon removed every objection, we began our march.

The aſcent for ſome time was not ſteep; and as the ſurface of the ſnow ſunk a little, we had tolerable good footing; but as it ſoon began to grow ſteeper, we found our labour greatly increaſe: however, we determined to perſevere, calling to mind, in the midſt of our labour, that the emperor Adrian and the philoſopher Plato had undergone the ſame; and from the ſame motive too, to ſee the riſing ſun from the top of Ætna. After incredible labour and fatigue, but at the ſame time mixed with

a great deal of pleaſure, we arrived before dawn at the ruins of an ancient ſtructure, called *Il Torre del Filoſofo*, ſuppoſed to have been built by the philoſopher Empedocles, who took up his habitation here the better to ſtudy the nature of mount Ætna. By others it is ſuppoſed to be the ruins of a temple of Vulcan, whoſe ſhop, all the world knows (where he uſed to make excellent thunderbolts and celeſtial armour, as well as nets to catch his wife when ſhe went aſtray), was ever kept in mount Ætna. Here we reſted ourſelves for ſome time, and made a freſh application to our liqueur bottle, which I am perſuaded, both Vulcan and Empedocles, had they been here, would have greatly approved of after ſuch a march.

I found the mercury had fallen to 20 : 6. We had now time to pay our adorations in a ſilent contemplation of the ſublime objects of nature. The ſky was clear, and the

the immenſe vault of the heavens appeared in awful majeſty and ſplendour. We found ourſelves more ſtruck with veneration than below, and at firſt were at a loſs to know the cauſe; till we obſerved with aſtoniſhment, that the number of ſtars ſeemed to be infinitely increaſed; and the light of each of them appeared brighter than uſual. The whiteneſs of the milky way was like a pure flame that ſhot acroſs the heavens; and with the naked eye we could obſerve cluſters of ſtars that were inviſible in the regions below. We did not at firſt attend to the cauſe, nor recollect that we had now paſſed through ten or twelve thouſand feet of groſs vapour, that blunts and confuſes every ray, before it reaches the ſurface of the earth. We were amazed at the diſtinctneſs of viſion, and exclaimed together, What a glorious ſituation for an obſervatory! had Empedocles had the eyes of Gallileo, what diſcoveries muſt he not have made! We regretted that Jupiter was not

viſible, as I am perſuaded we might have diſcovered ſome of his ſatellites with the naked eye, or at leaſt with a ſmall glaſs which I had in my pocket. We obſerved a light a great way below us on the mountain, which ſeemed to move amongſt the foreſts, but whether an Ignis Fatuus, or what it was, I ſhall not pretend to ſay. We likewiſe took notice of ſeveral of thoſe meteors called Falling Stars, which ſtill appeared to be as much elevated above us, as when ſeen from the plain; ſo that in all probability, thoſe bodies move in regions much beyond the bounds that ſome philoſophers have aſſigned to our atmoſphere.

After contemplating theſe objects for ſome time, we ſet off, and ſoon after arrived at the foot of the great crater of the mountain. This is of an exact conical figure, and riſes equally on all ſides. It is compoſed ſolely of aſhes and other burnt materials, diſcharged from the mouth of the

the volcano, which is in its center. This conical mountain is of a very great ſize: its circumference cannot be leſs than ten miles. Here we took a ſecond reſt, as the greateſt part of our fatigue ſtill remained. The mercury had fallen to 20: $4\frac{1}{2}$.—We found this mountain exceſſively ſteep; and although it had appeared black, yet it was likewiſe covered with ſnow, but the ſurface (luckily for us) was ſpread over with a pretty thick layer of aſhes, thrown out from the crater. Had it not been for this, we never ſhould have been able to get to the top; as the ſnow was every where frozen hard and ſolid, from the piercing cold of the air.

In about an hour's climbing, we arrived at a place where there was no ſnow; and where a warm and comfortable vapour iſſued from the mountain, which induced us to make another halt. Here I found the mercury at 19: $6\frac{1}{2}$. The thermometer

meter was fallen three degrees below the point of congelation; and before we left the ſummit of Ætna, it fell two degrees more, viz. to 27.—From this ſpot it was only about 300 yards to the higheſt ſummit of the mountain, where we arrived in full time, to ſee the moſt wonderful and moſt ſublime ſight in nature.

But here deſcription muſt ever fall ſhort; for no imagination has dared to form an idea of ſo glorious and ſo magnificent a ſcene. Neither is there on the ſurface of this globe, any one point that unites ſo many awful and ſublime objects.—The immenſe elevation from the ſurface of the earth, drawn as it were to a ſingle point, without any neighbouring mountain for the ſenſes and imagination to reſt upon, and recover from their aſtoniſhment in their way down to the world. This point or pinacle, raiſed on the brink of a bottomleſs gulph, as old as the world, often

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diſcharging rivers of fire, and throwing out burning rocks, with a noiſe that ſhakes the whole iſland. Add to this, the unbounded extent of the proſpect, comprehending the greateſt diverſity and the moſt beautiful ſcenery in nature; with the riſing ſun, advancing in the eaſt, to illuminate the wondrous ſcene.

The whole atmoſphere by degrees kindled up, and ſhewed dimly and faintly the boundleſs proſpect around. Both ſea and land looked dark and confuſed, as if only emerging from their original chaos; and light and darkneſs ſeemed ſtill undivided; till the morning by degrees advancing, completed the ſeparation. The ſtars are extinguiſhed, and the ſhades diſappear. The foreſts, which but now ſeemed black and bottomleſs gulphs, from whence no ray was reflected to ſhew their form or colours, appear a new creation riſing to the ſight; catching life and beauty from every

every increaſing beam. The ſcene ſtill enlarges, and the horizon ſeems to widen and expand itſelf on all ſides; till the Sun, like the great Creator, appears in the eaſt, and with his plaſtic ray completes the mighty ſcene.—All appears enchantment; and it is with difficulty we can believe we are ſtill on earth. The ſenſes, unaccuſtomed to the ſublimity of ſuch a ſcene, are bewildered and confounded; and it is not till after ſome time, that they are capable of ſeparating and judging of the objects that compoſe it.—The body of the Sun is ſeen riſing from the ocean, immenſe tracks both of ſea and land intervening; the iſlands of Lipari, Panari, Alicudi, Strombolo, and Volcano, with their ſmoking ſummits, appear under your feet; and you look down on the whole of Sicily as on a map: and can trace every river through all its windings, from its ſource to its mouth. The view is abſolutely boundleſs on every ſide; nor is there any one object,

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within the circle of viſion, to interrupt it; ſo that the ſight is every where loſt in the immenſity: and I am perſuaded it is only from the imperfection of our organs, that the coaſts of Africa, and even of Greece, are not diſcovered, as they are certainly above the horizon. The circumference of the viſible horizon on the top of Ætna cannot be leſs than 2000 miles: At Malta, which is near 200 miles diſtant, they perceive all the eruptions from the ſecond region; and that iſland is often diſcovered from about one half the elevation of the mountain; ſo that at the whole elevation, the horizon muſt extend to near double that diſtance, or 400 miles, which makes 800 for the diameter of the circle, and 2400 for the circumference. But this is by much too vaſt for our ſenſes, not intended to graſp ſo boundleſs a ſcene. I find, indeed, by ſome of the Sicilian authors, particularly Maſſa, that the African coaſt, as well as that of Naples, with many

many of its iſlands, have been diſcovered from the top of Ætna. Of this, however, we cannot boaſt, though we can very well believe it. Indeed, if we knew the height of the mountain, it would be eaſy to calculate the extent of its viſible horizon; and *(vice verſa)* if its viſible horizon was exactly aſcertained, it would be an eaſy matter to calculate the height of the mountain.—But the moſt beautiful part of the ſcene is certainly the mountain itſelf; the iſland of Sicily, and the numerous iſlands lying round it. All theſe, by a kind of magic in viſion, that I am at a loſs to account for, ſeem as if they were brought cloſe round the ſkirts of Ætna; the diſtances appearing reduced to nothing.—Perhaps this ſingular effect is produced by the rays of light paſſing from a rarer medium into a denſer; which (from a well-known law in optics) to an obſerver in the rare medium, appears to lift up the objects that are at the bottom of the denſe one; as a

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piece of money placed in a baſon appears lifted up as ſoon as the baſon is filled with water.

The *Regione Deſerta*, or the frigid zone of Ætna, is the firſt object that calls your attention. It is marked out by a circle of ſnow and ice, which extends on all ſides to the diſtance of about eight miles. In the center of this circle, the great crater of the mountain rears its burning head; and the regions of intenſe cold and of intenſe heat ſeem for ever to be united in the ſame point. —On the north ſide of the ſnowy region, they aſſure us, there are ſeveral ſmall lakes that are never thawed; and that in many places, the ſnow, mixed with the aſhes and ſalts of the mountain, is accumulated to a vaſt depth: And indeed I ſuppoſe the quantity of ſalts contained in this mountain, is one great reaſon of the preſervation of its ſnows.—The *Regione Deſerta* is immediately

mediately ſucceeded by the *Sylvoſa*, or the woody region; which forms a circle or girdle of the moſt beautiful green, which ſurrounds the mountain on all ſides, and is certainly one of the moſt delightful ſpots on earth. This preſents a remarkable contraſt with the deſert region. It is not ſmooth and even, like the greateſt part of the latter; but it is finely variegated by an infinite number of thoſe beautiful little mountains that have been formed by the different eruptions of Ætna. All theſe have now acquired a wonderful degree of fertility, except a very few that are but newly formed; that is, within theſe five or ſix hundred years: For it certainly requires ſome thouſands to bring them to their greateſt degree of perfection. We looked down into the craters of theſe, and attempted, but in vain, to number them.

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The circumference of this zone or great circle on Ætna is not leſs than 70 or 80 miles. It is every where ſucceeded by the vineyards, orchards, and corn-fields that compoſe the *Regione Culta*, or the fertile region. This laſt zone is much broader than the others, and extends on all ſides to the foot of the mountain. Its whole circumference, according to Recupero, is 183 miles. It is likewiſe covered with a number of little conical and ſpherical mountains, and exhibits a wonderful variety of forms and colours, and makes a delightful contraſt with the other two regions. It is bounded by the ſea to the ſouth and ſouth-eaſt, and on all its other ſides by the rivers Semetus and Alcantara, which run almoſt round it. The whole courſe of theſe rivers is ſeen at once, and all their beautiful windings through theſe fertile valleys, looked upon as the favourite poſſeſſion of Ceres herſelf, and the very ſcene of the rape of her daughter Proſerpine.

Caſt your eyes a little farther, and you embrace the whole iſland, and ſee all its cities, rivers, and mountains, delineated in the great chart of Nature: all the adjacent iſlands, the whole coaſt of Italy, as far as your eye can reach; for it is no where bounded, but every where loſt in the ſpace. On the ſun's firſt riſing, the ſhadow of the mountain extends acroſs the whole iſland, and makes a large track viſible even in the ſea and in the air. By degrees this is ſhortened, and, in a little time, is confined only to the neighbourhood of Ætna.

We now had time to examine a fourth region of this wonderful mountain, very different, indeed, from the others, and productive of very different ſenſations; but which has, undoubtedly, given being to all the reſt; I mean the region of fire.

The preſent crater of this immenſe volcano is a circle of about three miles and a half

half in circumference. It goes ſhelving down on each ſide, and forms a regular hollow like a vaſt amphitheatre. From many places of this ſpace, iſſue volumes of ſulphureous ſmoke, which, being much heavier than the circumambient air, inſtead of riſing in it, as ſmoke generally does, immediately on its getting out of the crater, rolls down the ſide of the mountain like a torrent, till coming to that part of the atmoſphere of the ſame ſpecific gravity with itſelf, it ſhoots off horizontally, and forms a large track in the air, according to the direction of the wind; which, happily for us, carried it exactly to the ſide oppoſite to that where we were placed. The crater is ſo hot, that it is very dangerous, if not impoſſible, to go down into it; beſides, the ſmoke is very incommodious, and, in many places, the ſurface is ſo ſoft, there have been inſtances of people ſinking down in it, and paying for their temerity with their lives. Near the centre of

the crater is the great mouth of the volcano. That tremendous gulph ſo celebrated in all ages, looked upon as the terror and ſcourge both of this and another life; and equally uſeful to ancient poets, or to modern divines, when the Muſe, or when the Spirit inſpires. We beheld it with awe and with horror, and were not ſurpriſed that it had been conſidered as the place of the damned. When we reflect on the immenſity of its depth, the vaſt cells and caverns whence ſo many lavas have iſſued; the force of its internal fire, to raiſe up thoſe lavas to ſo vaſt a height, to ſupport it as it were in the air, and even force it over the very ſummit of the crater, with all the dreadful accompaniments; the boiling of the matter, the ſhaking of the mountain, the exploſions of flaming rocks, &c. we muſt allow, that the moſt enthuſiaſtic imagination, in the midſt of all its terrors, hardly ever formed an idea of a hell more dreadful.

It was with a mixture both of pleaſure and pain, that we quitted this awful ſcene. But the wind had ariſen very high, and clouds began to gather round the mountain: In a ſhort time they formed like another heaven below us, and we were in hopes of ſeeing a thunder-ſtorm under our feet: a ſcene that is not uncommon in theſe exalted regions, and which I have already ſeen on the top of the high Alps: but the clouds were ſoon diſpelled again by the force of the wind, and we were diſappointed in our expectations.

I had often been told of the great effect produced by diſcharging a gun on the top of high mountains. I tried it here, when we were a good deal ſurpriſed to find, that inſtead of increaſing the ſound, it was almoſt reduced to nothing. The report was not equal to that of a pocket-piſtol: we compared it to the ſtroke of a ſtick on a

door; and ſurely it is conſiſtent with reaſon, that the thinner the air is, the leſs its impreſſion muſt be on the ear; for in a vacuum there can be no noiſe, or no impreſſion can be made; and the nearer the approach to a vacuum, the impreſſion muſt always be the ſmaller. Where thoſe great effects have been produced, it muſt have been amongſt a number of mountains, where the ſound is reverberated from one to the other.

When we arrived at the foot of the cone, we obſerved ſome rocks of an incredible ſize, that have been diſcharged from the crater. The largeſt that has been obſerved from Veſuvius, is a round one of about twelve feet diameter. Theſe are much greater; indeed almoſt in proportion of the mountains to each other.

On our arrival at the Torre del Filoſofo, we could not help admiring, that the ruins

ruins of this ſtructure have remained uncovered for ſo many ages, ſo near the top of Ætna, when thouſands of places at a great diſtance from it, have been repeatedly buried by its lavas, in a much ſhorter time. A proof that few eruptions have riſen ſo high in the mountain.

Empedocles was a native of Agrigentum, and is ſuppoſed to have died 400 years before the Chriſtian æra. Perhaps his vanity more than his philoſophy led him to this elevated ſituation; nay, it is ſaid to have carried him ſtill much farther:—That he might be looked upon as a god, and that the people might ſuppoſe he was taken up to heaven, he is recorded to have thrown himſelf headlong into the great gulph of mount Ætna, never ſuppoſing that his death could be diſcovered to mankind; but the treacherous mountain threw out his ſlippers, which were of braſs, and announced to the world the fate of the philoſopher,

who, by his death, as well as life, wanted only to impoſe upon mankind, and make them believe that he was greater than they.

However, if there is ſuch a thing as philoſophy on earth, this ſurely ought to be its ſeat. The proſpect is little inferior to that from the ſummit; and the mind enjoys a degree of ſerenity here, that even few philoſophers, I believe, could ever boaſt of on that tremendous point.—All Nature lies expanded below your feet, in her gayeſt and moſt luxuriant dreſs, and you ſtill behold united under one point of view, all the ſeaſons of the year, and all the climates of the earth. The meditations are ever elevated in proportion to the grandeur and ſublimity of the objects that ſurround us; and here, where you have all Nature to arouſe your admiration, what mind can remain inactive?

It has likewiſe been obſerved, and from experience I can ſay with truth, that on the tops

tops of the higheſt mountains, where the air is ſo pure and refined, and where there is not that immenſe weight of groſs vapours preſſing upon the body, the mind acts with greater freedom, and all the functions both of ſoul and body are performed in a ſuperior manner. It would appear, that in proportion as we are raiſed above the habitations of men, all low and vulgar ſentiments are left behind; and that the ſoul, in approaching the ætherial regions, ſhakes off its earthly affections, and already acquires ſomething of their celeſtial purity.—Here, where you ſtand under a ſerene ſky, and behold, with equal ſerenity, the tempeſt and ſtorm forming below your feet; the lightning darting from cloud to cloud, and the thunder rolling round the mountain, and threatening with deſtruction the poor wretches below; the mind conſiders the little ſtorms of the human paſſions as equally below her notice.—Surely the ſituation alone is enough to inſpire philoſo-

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phy, and Empedocles had good reaſon for chuſing it.

But, alas! how vain are all our reaſonings! In the very midſt of theſe meditations, my philoſophy was at once overſet, and in a moment I found myſelf relapſed into a poor miſerable mortal; was obliged to own, that pain was the greateſt of evils; and would have given the world to have been once more arrived at thoſe humble habitations, which but a moment before I had looked down upon with ſuch contempt.—In running over the ice, my leg folded under me, and I received ſo violent a ſprain, that in a few minutes it ſwelled to a great degree, and I found myſelf unable to put my foot to the ground. Every muſcle and fibre was at that time chilled and froze by the extreme cold, the thermometer continuing ſtill below the point of congelation. It was this circumſtance, I ſuppoſe, that made the pain ſo violent; for

for I lay a conſiderable time on the ice in great agony: However, in theſe exalted regions, it was impoſſible to have a horſe, or a carriage of any kind; and your poor philoſopher was obliged to hop on one leg, with two men ſupporting him, for ſeveral miles over the ſnow; and our wags here allege, that he left the greateſt part of his philoſophy behind him, for the uſe of Empedocles's heirs and ſucceſſors.

I was happy to get to my mule, but when I once more found myſelf on our bed of leaves in the Spelonca del Capriole, I thought I was in Paradiſe: ſo true it is, that a removal of pain is the greateſt of pleaſures. The agony I ſuffered, had thrown me into a profuſe ſweat and a fever; however, in an inſtant I fell faſt aſleep, and in an hour and a half awaked in perfect health. We had an excellent diſh of tea, the moſt refreſhing and agreeable I ever drank in all my life.

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We left the ſummit of the mountain about ſix o'clock, and it was eight at night before we reached Catania.—We obſerved, both with pleaſure and pain, the change of the climate as we deſcended.—From the regions of the moſt rigid winter, we ſoon arrived at thoſe of the moſt delightful ſpring. On firſt entering the foreſts, the trees were ſtill bare as in December, not a ſingle leaf to be ſeen; but after we had deſcended a few miles, we found ourſelves in the mildeſt and the ſofteſt of climates; the trees in full verdure, and the fields covered with all the flowers of the ſummer; but as ſoon as we got out of the woods, and entered the torrid zone, we found the heats altogether inſupportable, and ſuffered dreadfully from them before we reached the city. On the road I ſaw many mountains which I intended to have viſited, but my ſprain put it out of my power. One of the moſt remarkable is called the *Monte Pelluſe*, the lava of which deſtroyed the great aque-

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duct of Catania for eighteen miles. It has here and there left a few arches; but nothing of any conſequence.

Not far from this mountain ſtands the *Monte Victoria*, one of the moſt beautiful of all the numerous family of Ætna. It is of a pretty large ſize, and perfectly regular, and ſeems to be in the gayeſt dreſs of any. Many of its trees, which, at a diſtance, we took to be oranges and citrons, appeared to be in full blow. It was the lava of this mountain that is ſaid to have covered up the port of Ulyſſes, which is now three miles diſtant from the ſea; but I ſhould ſuppoſe this eruption to have been much older than either Ulyſſes or Troy.

On our arrival at Catania, we went immediately to bed, being exceedingly oppreſſed by the fatigue of our expedition; but ſtill more by the violent heat of the day: a day, in which, I think, I have

enjoyed a greater degree of pleaſure, and ſuffered a greater degree of pain, than in any other day of my life.

As my leg continues very much ſwelled, I am ſtill confined to my room, and moſtly, indeed, to my bed, from whence I have written you the greateſt part of theſe two epiſtles, the enormous length of which I am aſhamed of. However, as I have ſtill omitted ſeveral articles, that I intended to take notice of, I ſhall add a ſequel to-morrow; and ſo conclude my account of Mount Ætna. Had it not been for this abominable ſprain, that holds me faſt by the foot, you probably had not got off ſo eaſily; but I am obliged to drop all farther thoughts of climbing mountains, though there are many things I ſtill wanted to examine. Adieu.

Ever yours.

LETTER XI.

Catania, May 30th.

WE took care to regulate two barometers at the foot of the mountain. One of which was left with the Canonico Recupero, and the other we carried along with us. The former our friend aſſures us, had no ſenſible variation during our abſence. We both left it and found it at 29 inches 8 lines and a half Engliſh meaſure. On our arrival at Catania, the one we carried up with us had riſen again exactly to the ſame point.

I have likewiſe a good quick-ſilver thermometer, which I borrowed from the Neapolitan philoſopher, the Padre della Torre, who furniſhed us with letters for this place, and would have accompanied us, could he

have obtained leave of the king. It is made by Adams at London, and (as I myſelf proved) exactly graduated from the two points of freezing and boiling water. It is upon Fahrenheit's ſcale. I ſhall mark the heights in the different regions of Ætna, with the rules for eſtimating the elevation of mountains by the barometer, which, I am ſorry to ſay, have been hitherto ſo very ill aſcertained. Caſſini, Boguer, and the others who have written on the ſubject, to the reproach of ſcience, differing ſo much amongſt themſelves, that it is with difficulty we can come near the truth.

Ætna has been often meaſured, but I believe never with any degree of accuracy; and it is really a ſhame to the ſociety eſtabliſhed in this place, called the Ætnean academy, whoſe original inſtitution was to ſtudy the nature and operations of this wonderful mountain. It was my full intention to have meaſured it geometrically; but

but I am ſorry to ſay, although this is both the ſeat of an academy and univerſity, yet there was no quadrant to be had. Of all the mountains I have ever ſeen, Ætna would be the eaſieſt to meaſure, and with the greateſt certainty, and perhaps the propereſt place on the globe to eſtabliſh an exact rule of menſuration by the barometer. There is a beach of a vaſt extent, that begins exactly at the foot of the mountain, and runs for a great many miles along the coaſt. The ſea-mark of this beach forms the meridian to the ſummit of the mountain. Here you are ſure of a perfect level, and may make the baſe of your triangle of what length you pleaſe. But unfortunately this menſuration has never been executed, at leaſt with any tolerable degree of preciſion.

Kircher pretends to have meaſured it, and to have found it 4000 French toiſes in

height; which is more than any of the Andes, or indeed than any mountain upon earth. The Italian mathematicians are ſtill more abſurd. Some of them make it eight miles, ſome ſix, and ſome four. Amici, the laſt, and I believe the beſt who has made the attempt, reduces it to three miles, 264 paces; but even this muſt be exceedingly erroneous; and probably the perpendicular height of Ætna does not exceed 12,000 feet, or little more than two miles. I ſhall mark the different methods of determining heights by the barometer; and you may chuſe which you pleaſe. I believe the allowance in all of them, particularly in great elevations, where the air is ſo exceedingly thin and light, is much too ſmall. Mikeli, whoſe menſurations are eſteemed more exact, has ever found it ſo. Caſſini allows, I think, ten French toiſes of elevation, for every line of mercury, adding one foot to the firſt ten, two to the ſecond,

three to the third, and ſo on: But ſurely the weight of the air diminiſhes in a much greater proportion.

Boguer takes the difference of the logarithms of the height of the barometer in lines (ſuppoſing theſe logarithms to conſiſt only of five figures); from this difference he takes away a 30th part, and what remains he ſuppoſes to be the difference of elevation. I do not recollect his reaſon for this ſuppoſition; but the rule ſeems to be ſtill more erroneous than the other, and has been entirely laid aſide. I am told, that accurate experiments have been made at Geneva, to eſtabliſh the menſuration with the barometer; but I have not yet been able to procure them. Mr. de la Hire allows twelve toiſes four feet for the line of mercury: And Picart, one of the moſt exact of the French academicians, fourteen toiſes, or about ninety Engliſh feet.

Height of Farenheit's Thermometer.

At Catania, May 26, at mid-day	76
Ditto, May 27, at five in the morning - - -	72
At Nicoloſi, 12 miles up the mountain, mid-day - -	73
At the cave, called Spelonca del Capriole, in the ſecond region, where there was ſtill a conſiderable quantity of ſnow, at ſeven at night - -	61
In the ſame cave at half an hour paſt eleven - -	52
At the Torre del Filoſofo, in the third region, at three in the morning - - -	34½
At the foot of the crater of Ætna	33
About half-way up the crater -	29
On the ſummit of Ætna, a little before ſun-riſe - -	27

Height

Height of the Barometer in inches and lines.

At the ſea-ſide at Catania	-	29 $8\frac{1}{2}$
At the village of Piedmonte, in the firſt region of Ætna	-	27 8
At Nicoloſi, in the ſame region		27 $1\frac{1}{2}$
At the Caſtagno de Cento Cavalli, in the ſecond region	-	26 $5\frac{1}{2}$
At the Spelonca del Capriole, in the ſecond region	- -	24 2
At the Torre del Filoſofo, in the third region	- -	20 5
At the foot of the crater	-	20 $4\frac{1}{2}$
Within about 300 yards of the ſummit	- - -	19 $6\frac{1}{2}$
At the ſummit of Ætna (ſuppoſed to be about)	- -	19 4

The wind at the ſummit was ſo violent that I could not make the obſervation with perfect exactneſs; however, I am pretty certain that it was within half a line.

I own I did not believe we ſhould find Ætna ſo high. I had heard indeed that it was higher than any of the Alps, but I never gave credit to it:—How great then was my aſtoniſhment to find that the mercury fell almoſt two inches lower than I had ever obſerved it on the very higheſt of the acceſſible Alps; at the ſame time I am perſuaded there are many inacceſſible points of the Alps (particularly Mont Blanc) that are ſtill much higher than Ætna.

I found the magnetical needle greatly agitated near the ſummit of the mountain (the Padre della Torre told me, he had made the ſame obſervation on Veſuvius); however, it always fixed at the north point, though it took longer time in fixing than below. But what Recupero told me happened to him, was very ſingular.—Soon after the eruption 1755, he placed his compaſs on the lava. The needle, he ſays, to

his

his great aſtoniſhment, was agitated with much violence for ſome conſiderable time, till at laſt it entirely loſt its magnetical power, ſtanding indiſcriminately at every point of the compaſs; and this it never after recovered, till it was again touched with the loadſtone.

The wind, and my unfortunate ſprain together, in a great meaſure prevented our electrical experiments, on which we had built not a little; however, I found that round Nicoloſi, and particularly on the top of Monpelieri, the air was in a very favourable ſtate for electrical operations. Here the little pith-balls, when inſolated, were ſenſibly affected, and repelled each other above an inch. I expected this electrical ſtate of the air would have increaſed as we advanced on the mountain; but at the cave where we ſlept, I could obſerve no ſuch effect. Perhaps, it was owing to the exhalations from the trees

and vegetables, which are there exceedingly luxuriant; whereas about Nicoloſi, and round Monpelieri, there is hardly any thing but lava and dry hot ſand.—Or perhaps it might be owing to the evening being farther advanced, and the dews beginning to fall. However, I have no doubt, that upon theſe mountains formed by eruption, where the air is ſtrongly impregnated with ſulphureous effluvia, great electrical diſcoveries might be made. And perhaps, of all the reaſons aſſigned for the wonderful vegetation that is performed on this mountain, there is none that contributes ſo much towards it, as this conſtant electrical ſtate of the air: For from a variety of experiments it has been found, that an increaſe of the electrical matter adds much to the progreſs of vegetation. It probably acts there in the ſame manner as on the animal body;—the circulation we know is performed quicker; and the juices are driven through the ſmall veſſels

with

with more eaſe and celerity. This has often been proved from the immediate removal of obſtructions by electricity;—and probably the rubbing with dry and warm flannel, eſteemed ſo efficacious in ſuch caſes, is doing nothing more than exciting a greater degree of electricity in the part; but it has likewiſe been demonſtrated, by the common experiment of making water drop through a ſmall capillary ſyphon, which the moment it is electrified runs in a full ſtream.—I have, indeed, very little doubt, that the fertility of our ſeaſons depends as much on this quality in the air, as either on its heat or moiſture.

Electricity will probably ſoon be conſidered as the great vivifying principle of Nature, by which ſhe carries on moſt of her operations.—It is a fifth element, diſtinct from, and of a ſuperior nature to the other four, which only compoſe the corporeal parts of matter: But this ſubtile and active

active fluid is a kind of ſoul that pervades and quickens every particle of it.—When an equal quantity of this is diffuſed through the air, and over the face of the earth, every thing continues calm and quiet; but if by any accident one part of matter has acquired a greater quantity than another, the moſt dreadful conſequences often enſue before the equilibrium can be reſtored.—Nature ſeems to fall into convulſions, and many of her works are deſtroyed:—All the great phænomena are produced; thunder, lightning, earthquakes, and whirlwinds: For, I believe, there is little doubt, that all theſe frequently depend on this ſole cauſe. And again, if we look down from the ſublime of nature to its minutiæ, we ſhall ſtill find the ſame power acting, though perhaps in leſs legible characters; for as the knowledge of its operations is ſtill in its infancy, they are generally miſunderſtood, or aſcribed to ſome other cauſe. However, I have no doubt,

doubt, that in proceſs of time theſe will be properly inveſtigated; when mankind will wonder how much they have been in the dark. It will then poſſibly be found, that what we call ſenſibility of nerves, and many of thoſe diſeaſes that the faculty have as yet only invented names for, are owing to the body's being poſſeſſed of too large or too ſmall a quantity of this ſubtile and active fluid; that very fluid, perhaps, that is the vehicle of all our feelings; and which they have ſo long ſearched for in vain in the nerves: For I have ſometimes been led to think, that this ſenſe was nothing elſe than a ſlighter kind of electric effect, to which the nerves ſerve as conductors; and that it is by the rapid circulation of this penetrating and animating fire that our ſenſations are performed. We all know, that in damp and hazy weather, when it ſeems to be blunted and abſorbed by the humidity; when its activity is loſt, and little or none of it can be collected;

collected; we ever find our ſpirits more languid, and our ſenſibility leſs acute: but in the Sirocc wind at Naples, when the air ſeems totally deprived of it, the whole ſyſtem is unſtrung, and the nerves ſeem to loſe both their tenſion and elaſticity, till the north or weſt wind awakens the activity of this animating power, which ſoon reſtores the tone, and enlivens all nature, which ſeemed to droop and languiſh during its abſence.

It is likewiſe well known, that there have been inſtances of the human body becoming electric without the mediation of any electric ſubſtance, and even emitting ſparks of fire with a diſagreeable ſenſation, and an extreme degree of nervous ſenſibility.

About ſeven or eight years ago, a lady in Switzerland was affected in this manner, and though I was not able to learn all the particulars of her caſe, yet ſeveral Swiſs

gentlemen have confirmed to me the truth of the ſtory.—She was uncommonly ſenſible of every change of weather, and had her electrical feelings ſtrongeſt in a clear day, or during the paſſage of thunder-clouds, when the air is known to be replete with that fluid. Her caſe, like moſt others which the doctors can make nothing of, was decided to be a *nervous* one; for the real meaning of that term I take to be only, that the phyſician does not underſtand what it is.

Two gentlemen of Geneva had a ſhort experience of the ſame ſort of complaint, though ſtill in a much ſuperior degree.—Profeſſor Sauſſure and young Mr. Jalabert, when travelling over one of the high Alps, were caught amongſt thunder-clouds; and to their utter aſtoniſhment, found their bodies ſo full of electrical fire, that ſpontaneous flaſhes darted from their fingers with a crackling noiſe, and the ſame kind of ſenſation

ſation as when ſtrongly electrified by art.—This was communicated by Mr. Jalabert to the Academy of Sciences at Paris, I think, in the year 1763; and you will find it recorded in their memoirs.

It ſeems pretty evident, I think, that theſe feelings were owing to the bodies being poſſeſſed of too great a ſhare of electric fire. This is an uncommon caſe; but I do not think it at all improbable, that many of our invalids, particularly the hypochondriac, and thoſe we call *Malades Imaginaires*, owe their diſagreeable feelings to the oppoſite cauſe, or the bodies being poſſeſſed of too ſmall a quantity of this fire; for we find that a diminution of it in the air ſeldom fails to increaſe their uneaſy ſenſations, and *vice verſa*.

Perhaps it might be of ſervice to theſe people to wear ſome electric ſubſtance next their ſkin, to defend the nerves and fibres from

from the damp, or non-electric air.—I would propoſe a waiſtcoat of the fineſt flannel, which ſhould be kept perfectly clean and dry; for the effluvia of the body, in caſe of any violent perſpiration, will ſoon deſtroy its electric quality: This ſhould be covered by another of the ſame ſize of ſilk. The animal heat, and the friction that exerciſe muſt occaſion betwixt theſe two ſubſtances, produce a powerful electricity; and would form a kind of electric atmoſphere around the body, that might poſſibly be one of the beſt preſervatives againſt the effect of damps.

As for our Swiſs lady, I have little doubt that her complaints were owing in great part, perhaps entirely, to her dreſs; and that a very ſmall alteration, almoſt in any part of it, would effectually have cured her. A lady who has her head ſurrounded with wires, and her hair ſtuck full of metal

pins,

pins, and who at the ſame time ſtands upon dry ſilk, is to all intents and purpoſes an electrical conductor inſolated, and prepared for collecting the fire from the atmoſphere: And it is not at all ſurpriſing, that during thunder-ſtorms, or when the air is extremely replete with electrical matter, ſhe ſhould emit ſparks, and exhibit other appearances of electricity.—I imagine a very trifling change of dreſs, which from the conſtant verſatility of their modes may ſome day take place, would render this lady's diſeaſe altogether epidemical amongſt the ſex. —Only let the ſoles of their ſhoes be made of an electric ſubſtance, and let the wires of their caps, and pins of their hair, be ſomewhat lengthened and pointed outwards; and I think there is little doubt, that they will often find themſelves in an electrified ſtate:—But, indeed, if they only wear ſilk, or even worſted ſtockings, it may ſometimes prove ſufficient; for I have often inſolated electrometers as perfectly by placing

cing them on a piece of dry ſilk or flannel, as on glaſs.

How little do our ladies imagine, when they ſurround their heads with wire, the moſt powerful of all conductors; and at the ſame time wear ſtockings, ſhoes, and gowns of ſilk, one of the moſt powerful repellents, that they prepare their bodies in the ſame manner, and according to the ſame principles, as electricians prepare their conductors for attracting the fire of lightning! If they cannot be brought to relinquiſh their wire caps and their pins, might they not fall upon ſome ſuch preſervative as thoſe which of late years have been applied to objects of leſs conſequence?

Suppoſe that every lady ſhould provide herſelf with a ſmall chain or wire, to be hooked on at pleaſure during thunderſtorms. This ſhould paſs from her cap over

the thickeſt part of her hair, which will prevent the fire from being communicated to her head; and ſo down to the ground. —It is plain this will act in the ſame manner as the conductors on the tops of ſteeples, which from the metal ſpires that are commonly placed there, analogous to the pins and wires, were ſo liable to accidents. You may laugh at all this; but I aſſure you I never was more ſerious in my life. A very amiable lady of my acquaintance, Mrs. Douglas of Kelſo, had almoſt loſt her life by one of thoſe caps mounted on wire. She was ſtanding at an open window during a thunder-ſtorm: the lightning was attracted by the wire, and the cap was burnt to aſhes; happily her hair was in its natural ſtate, without powder, pomatum, or pins; and prevented the fire from being conducted to her head; for as ſhe felt no kind of ſhock, it is probable that it went off from the wires of the cap to the wall, cloſe to which ſhe then ſtood. If it had found

found any conductor to carry it to her head or body, in all probability ſhe muſt have been killed.—A good ſtrong head of hair, if it is kept perfectly clean and dry, is probably one of the beſt preſervatives againſt the fire of lightning. But ſo ſoon as it is ſtuffed full of powder and pomatum, and bound together with pins, its repellent force is loſt, and it becomes a conductor *. —But I beg pardon for theſe ſurmiſes: I throw

* Since the writing of theſe letters, the author has made ſome experiments on the electricity of hair; which tend ſtill to convince him the more of what he has advanced. A lady had told him, that on combing her hair in froſty weather in the dark, ſhe had ſometimes obſerved ſparks of fire to iſſue from it. This made him think of attempting to collect the electrical fire from hair alone, without the aſſiſtance of any other electrical apparatus. To this end, he deſired a young lady to ſtand on a cake of bees-wax, and to comb her ſiſter's hair, who was ſitting on a chair before her.——Soon after ſhe began to comb, the young lady on the wax was greatly aſtoniſhed to find her whole body electrified; darting out ſparks of fire againſt

I throw them in your way only for you to improve upon at your leiſure: for we have it ever in our power to be making experiments in electricity. And although this fluid is the moſt ſubtle and active of any we know, we can command it on all occaſions; and I am now ſo accuſtomed to its operations, that I ſeldom comb my hair, or pull off a ſtocking, without obſerving them under ſome form or other. How ſurpriſing is it then, that mankind ſhould have lived and breathed in it for ſo many

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every object that approached her. The hair was extremely electrical, and affected an electrometer at a very great diſtance: he charged a metal conductor from it with great eaſe; and in the ſpace of a few minutes collected as much fire immediately from the hair, as to kindle common ſpirits; and by means of a ſmall phial, gave many ſmart ſhocks to all the company. A full account of theſe experiments was lately read before the Royal Society. They were made during the time of a very hard froſt, and on a ſtrong head of hair, where no powder or pomatum had been uſed for many months.

thouſand

thouſand years, without almoſt ever ſuppoſing that it exiſted! But to return to our mountain.

Recupero told me he had obſerved the ſame phænomenon here that is common in the eruptions of Mount Veſuvius, viz. red forked lightning darting from the ſmoke, without being followed by the noiſe of thunder. The reaſon poſſibly is, that the crater and ſmoke is at that time ſo highly electrical, that, like a cylinder or globe heated by friction, it throws off ſpontaneous flaſhes into the air, without being brought into the attraction of any conductor, or body leſs electric than itſelf (indeed the ſpontaneous diſcharges from a good electrical globe, often bear a perfect reſemblance to this kind of lightning); however, if a non-electric cloud were to paſs near the crater at that time, the craſh of thunder would probably be very violent, which indeed is often the caſe when the air is full

of wet clouds in the time of an eruption; but when this does not happen, the equilibrium is probably reſtored by degrees, and without any ſhock, from the ſurplus of electrical matter being gradually communicated to the earth and ſea all around the mountain; the immenſe lavas that have run from it, ſerving as conductors.

So highly electric is the vapour of volcanos, that it has been obſerved in ſome eruptions both of Ætna and Veſuvius, that the whole track of ſmoke, which ſometimes extended above 100 miles, produced the moſt dreadful effects; killing ſhepherds and flocks on the mountains; blaſting trees, and ſetting fire to houſes; wherever it met with them on an elevated ſituation. Now probably the flying of a kite, with a wire round its ſtring, would ſoon have diſarmed this formidable cloud. Theſe effects, however, only happen when the air is dry and little agitated, but when it is full of moiſt

moiſt vapour, the great rarefaction from the heat of the lava generally brings it down in violent torrents of rain, which ſoon convey the electrical matter from the clouds to the earth, and reſtores the equilibrium.

As Recupero, who is a facetious and an agreeable companion, was kind enough to ſit a good deal with me during my confinement, I have gathered many remarks from his converſation, that may perhaps be worthy of your attention.

The variety of waters about Ætna, he tells me, is ſurpriſing. I have already mentioned the Fiume Freddo, or the river of Acis: Recupero confirms what I had been told of it. There is a lake on the north of the mountain, of about three miles in circumference, which receives ſeveral conſiderable rivers; yet, although there is no apparent outlet, it never overflows its

banks. I ſuggeſted the probability of a ſubterraneous communication betwixt this and the Fiume Freddo. He ſaid there was no reſemblance in the quality of their waters; however, I think it is probable, that in a courſe of ſo many miles, through the caverns of Ætna, full of ſalts and minerals, it may acquire both its cold and its vitriolic qualities.

There is another lake on the top of a mountain to the weſt of Ætna, the bottom of which could never be found. It is obſerved never either to riſe or fall, but always to preſerve the ſame level. It is undoubtedly the crater of that mountain (which is all of burnt matter) converted into a lake. The river which ſupplies the baths of Catania is of a very different nature: It never continues the ſame, but is perpetually changing. Its current is for the moſt part confined under ground by the lavas; but ſometimes it burſts out with

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ſuch violence that the city has ſuffered greatly from it; and what is ſtill more unfortunate, theſe eruptions are generally followed by ſome epidemical diſtemper. It has now been conſtantly diminiſhing for theſe two years paſt, and is at preſent almoſt reduced to nothing. They are in perpetual dread of its breaking out, and laying waſte their fields, as it has ſo often done before. What is ſingular, it generally burſts out after a long tract of the drieſt and warmeſt weather. The Ætnean academy have never been able to account for this circumſtance. I think it is moſt probable that it ariſes from the melting of the ſnow on Ætna, but I ſhall not pretend to ſay how.—Theſe, perhaps, overfilling the caverns that uſually receive their water, the ſurplus is carried off into this river.

The river of Alcantara certainly takes its riſe from the melting of theſe ſnows. Its waters,

waters, I obſerved, are of the ſame whitiſh colour as all the rivers are that run from the Glacieres amongſt the Alps. There are ſeveral periodical ſprings on Ætna, that flow only during the day, and ſtop during the night. Theſe are naturally and eaſily accounted for from the melting of the ſnow; for it melts only during the day, being hard frozen every night, even in the hotteſt ſeaſon. There are likewiſe a variety of poiſonous ſprings, ſome of ſo deadly a quality, that birds and beaſts have been found lying dead on their banks, from having drunk of their water. But (what is perhaps ſtill more ſingular) Recupero told me, that about twenty years ago, a rent opened in the mountain, that for a conſiderable time ſent forth ſo mephitic a vapour, that, like the lake Avernus, birds were ſuffocated in flying over it.

There are many caverns where the air is is ſo extremely cold, that it is impoſſible to ſupport

ſupport it for any time. Theſe the peaſants make uſe of as reſervoirs for the ſnow; and indeed they make the fineſt ice-houſes in the world, preſerving it hard frozen during the hotteſt ſummers. It would be endleſs to give an account of all the caverns, and other curious appearances about Ætna. Kircher ſpeaks of a cave which he ſaw, capable, he ſays, of containing 30,000 men. Here, he adds, numbers of people have been loſt from their temerity in going too far. One of theſe caverns ſtill retains the name of Proſerpine, from its being ſuppoſed by the ancients, the paſſage by which Pluto conveyed her into his dominions; on this occaſion Ovid deſcribes Ceres, as ſearching for her daughter, with two trees which ſhe had plucked from the mountain, and lighted by way of torches. Theſe he calls Teda, which is ſtill the name of a tree I have ſeen no where but on Mount Ætna. It produces a great quantity of roſin, and was ſurely the moſt proper

tree

tree Ceres could have pitched upon for her purpoſe. This roſin is called *Catalana*, and is eſteemed a cure for ſores.

I have mentioned the great variety of flowers, trees, &c. on Mount Ætna. I have found a long liſt of them in Maſſa; but as I am not acquainted with their Sicilian names, I can make little out of it. I have engaged a perſon here to procure me a collection of their ſeeds in the ſeaſon. I find of the number, the cinnamon, ſarſaparilla, ſaſſafras, rhubarb, and many others that I thought had not been natives of Europe. The Palma Chriſti too, that plant ſo much celebrated of late, from the ſeed of which the caſtor oil is made, grows both here and in many other places of Sicily, in the greateſt abundance. Our botaniſts have called it Ricinus Americanus, ſuppoſing it only to be produced in that part of the world. A Bath phyſician, I remember, has lately written a treatiſe on this plant,

and the virtues of the oil extracted from its ſeed, which he makes a ſort of Catholicon. You may believe we ſhall not leave Sicily without providing ourſelves with a quantity of this precious ſeed.

Mount Ætna, I find, is as much celebrated by the ancients as the moderns, for the variety of its odoriferous productions. Plutarch ſays, their ſmell was ſo ſtrong, that on many places of the mountain it was impoſſible to hunt. I ſhall tranſcribe the paſſage as it is before me in an old tranſlation I have borrowed: "Circum Ætnam "in Sicilia neminem ferunt cum canibus "venatum iri; quia enim multos per- "petuo illic ut in viridario prata, colleſ- "que flores mittunt a fragrantia, quæ eam "oram occupat, obfuſcare ferarum anhela- "tiones, &c." Ariſtotle has likewiſe a paſſage to the very ſame purpoſe; but this may ſuffice.

There

There were formerly a variety of wild beaſts in the woody regions of Ætna; but notwithſtanding this advantage they had over the dogs and hunters, the number of theſe is now greatly reduced.—They have ſtill however the wild boar, the roebuck, and a kind of wild goat; but the race of ſtags which was much celebrated, as well as that of bears, is thought to be extinct. Several places of the mountain are ſtill named from thoſe animals.

The horſes and cattle of Mount Ætna were eſteemed the beſt in Sicily. The cattle are ſtill of a large ſize, and have horns of ſuch a length, that they are preſerved as curioſities in ſome muſeums. The horſes, I am afraid, have degenerated.

There are ſaid to be quantities of porcupines and land tortoiſes on ſome parts of Ætna; but we had not the good fortune to meet with any of them. Neither did we

ſee

ſee any eagles or vultures, which are likewiſe ſaid to be inhabitants of this mountain.

The accounts given of Mount Ætna by the old Sicilian authors (ſeveral of whom I have borrowed from Recupero) are very various. Some of them deſcribe the hollow of the crater as being ſeven or eight miles in circumference, ſome make it five, and others only three: and probably all of them are right; for I find, by all their accounts, that generally once in about 100 years, the whole crater has fallen down into the bowels of the mountain: that in proceſs of time, a new crater is ſeen peeping out of the gulph; which, perpetually increaſing by the matter thrown up, is by degrees raiſed again to its ancient height, till at laſt becoming too heavy for its hollow foundations, it again gives way, and at once ſinks down into the mountain. This happened about 100 years ago, in the

year 1669, as recorded by Borelli, whoſe account of it I have before me. "Univer-
"ſum cacumen, quod ad inſtar ſpeculæ,
"ſeu turris, ad ingentem altitudinem ele-
"vabatur, quod una cum vaſta planitie
"arenoſa depreſſa, atque abſorpta eſt in
"profundum voraginem," &c. The ſame likewiſe happened in the year 1536, as recorded by Fazello and Filoteo, and in the years 1444, 1329, and 1157. Of all theſe I have read an account; but probably betwixt the two laſt mentioned, there has been another that is not recorded, as the intervals betwixt all the reſt are pretty nearly equal.

Some of them give a dreadful account of it. Folcando, one of their hiſtorians, tells us, it ſhook the whole iſland, and reſounded through all its ſhores. And their poet Errico ſays, on the ſame occaſion,

"*S'ode*

" *S'ode il ſuo gran mugito*
" *Per mille piagge e lidi.*"

" The bellowing dire a thouſand lands reſound,
" Whoſe trembling ſhores return the dreadful
" ſound."

In all probability, this event will very ſoon happen, as the circumference of the crater is no where recorded to have been reduced to leſs than three miles; and Recupero ſays, it is at preſent only three miles and a half; beſides, 100 years, the common period, has now elapſed ſince its laſt fall.

There are many ſtories of people periſhing by their temerity, in being too curious ſpectators of the eruptions of this mountain; but there are ſtill many more, of thoſe that have been miraculouſly ſaved by the interpoſition of ſome ſaint or the Virgin, who are ſuppoſed to be in a perpetual ſtate of warfare with the devils in mount Ætna. That part of the iſland where Ætna ſtands, has ever been named *il Val Demoni*;

from the frequent apparitions of theſe devils. It makes one third of the iſland. The other two are named the *Val di Noto*, and the *Val di Mazzara*.

There is one ſtory, though a very old one, that is ſtill related at Catania; it is taken notice of by Seneca, Ariſtotle, Strabo, and others. In the time of a great eruption, when the fire was pouring down upon the city, and every one was carrying off his moſt valuable effects; two rich brothers, named *Anfinomus* and *Anapias*, neglecting all their wealth, eſcaped from the conflagration with their aged parents on their backs. Theſe authors add, that the fire, reſpecting ſuch filial piety, ſpared them, whilſt many others that took the ſame road were conſumed.

This action has been wonderfully extolled, and proves, I think, that feats of this kind were by no means common in

thoſe days.—Now, pray, don't you think, in the world at preſent, bad as it is ſuppoſed to be, there are few ſons, who would not have acted in the ſame manner? and ſure I am, the reſt of mankind would not have made ſuch a fuſs about it. Humanity and natural affection, I believe, in thoſe ages we are inclined to extol ſo much, were not by many degrees ſo powerful as they are at preſent.—Even the pious Æneas himſelf, one of the moſt renowned of all their heroes, was in effect but a ſavage, notwithſtanding all that Virgil ſays to perſuade us of the contrary; for you find him ſacrificing his weak and captive enemies, at the ſame time that he is canting and preaching up piety and juſtice.

Theſe two brothers were ſo celebrated for this action, that there was a diſpute betwixt Syracuſe and Catania, which of theſe cities had given them birth; and temples were erected in both of them,

dedicated to Filial Piety, in memory of the event.

In the accounts of the more recent deſtructions of Catania, there occurs no inſtance of this ſort.—We find them only lamenting the loſs of prieſts and nuns, and very much out of humour at their ſaints, for allowing the devils to get the better of them. I have been a good deal entertained with ſome of thoſe authors.—Selvaggio, one of their poets, ſpeaking of the terrible earthquake in the year 1169, that deſtroyed Catania, and buried multitudes of people in the ruins, deſcribes it in the following manner, which may ſerve as a ſpecimen of the poetry of that time.

" Cataneam doleo, dolor eſt miſerabile dictu :
Clara potens antiqua fuit ; plebe, milite, clero,
Divitiis, auro, ſpecie, virtute, triumphis.
Heu terræ motu ruit illa potentia rerum !
Morte ruit juvenis, moritur vir, ſponſa, maritus.

Unde

Unde ſuperbit homo? Deus una diruit hora
Turres, ornatus, veſtes, cunctoſque paratus.
In tanto gemitu periit pars maxima gentis,
Proh dolor! et monachi quadraginta quatuor et plus:
Et periit paſtor patriæ, pater ipſe Johannes
Pontificalis honor, lux regni ſic periere."

But another, Guſtanavilla, one of their hiſtorians, gives a very different account of this affair; as it is likewiſe ſomewhat curious in its way, I ſhall copy it for your amuſement: "In omnem terram, et in "fines orbis terræ jam exiit plaga illa, qua "nuper in Sicilia percuſſi ſunt Catanenſes "in vigilia B. Agathæ; cum epiſcopus ille "damnatiſſimus, qui, ſicut ſcitis, ſibi ſumpſit "honorem, non vocatus a Domino, tan-"quam Aaron, et qui ad ſedem illam, non "electione canonica, ſed Gieziticâ venalita-"te intravit; cum, inquam, abominationis "offerret incenſum, intonuit de cœlo Do-"minus, et ecce terræ motus factus eſt "magnus; angelus enim Domini percu-

" tiens epiſcopum in furore Domini cum
" populo, et univerſa civitate ſubvertit."

He adds, that if St. Agatha's veil had not been produced, the angel of the Lord was in ſuch a fury, that he would not have left one ſoul alive.

There is a curious painting of the great eruption 1669, in the cathedral of this place. It is but indifferently painted, but gives a dreadful idea of that event. Borrelli, who was upon the ſpot, deſcribes it.—He ſays, on the 11th of March, ſome time before the lava burſt out, after violent earthquakes and dreadful ſubterraneous bellowing, a rent was opened in the mountain twelve miles long; in ſome places of which, when they threw down ſtones, they could not hear them ſtrike the bottom. He ſays, that burning rocks, ſixty palms in length, were thrown to the diſtance of a mile; and that the giants, ſuppoſed to be buried under

mount

mount Ætna, ſeemed to have renewed their war againſt heaven: That ſtones of a leſſer ſize were carried upwards of three miles; and that the thunder and lightning from the ſmoke, was ſcarce leſs terrible than the noiſe of the mountain. He adds, that after the moſt violent ſtruggles and ſhaking of the whole iſland, when the lava at laſt burſt through, it ſprung up into the air to the height of ſixty palms.—In ſhort, he deſcribes that event, as well as the univerſal terror and conſternation it occaſioned, in terms full of horror.—For many weeks the ſun did not appear, and the day ſeemed to be changed into night.—Soon after the lava got vent, which was not till four months from the time that the mountain began to labour, all theſe dreadful ſymptoms abated, and it was ſoon after perfectly quiet.

He ſays, this deluge of fire, after deſtroying the fineſt country in Sicily, and

ſweeping away churches, villages, and convents, broke over the lofty walls of Catania, and covered up five of its baſtions with the intervening curtains. From thence pouring down on the city, it deſtroyed every object it met with, overwhelming and burying all in one promiſcuous ruin.

What he regrets moſt, was ſome precious remains of antiquity; the names, the ſituation, and even the memory of whoſe exiſtence, is now loſt in the place. He mentions an amphitheatre, which he calls *Colliſeo*, the *Circus Maximus*, the *Naumachia*, and ſeveral temples.

An account of this great eruption was ſent to Charles II. by Lord Winchelſea, who was then returning from his embaſſy at Conſtantinople, and ſtopped here on purpoſe to ſee ſo remarkable an event. But his lordſhip has not been at that pains to examine it we could have wiſhed. His curioſity

curioſity was ſatisfied in one day; and he ſeems to have been contented only to look at the lava at a great diſtance; but did not think of examining its ſource, or aſcending the mountain, although at that time all the moſt formidable circumſtances of the eruption were already over.

I ſhould not finiſh this account of mount Ætna, without ſaying ſomething of the various fables and allegories to which it has given riſe; but it would probably lead me into too vaſt a field, and give this more the air of a diſſertation than a letter or a journal. Theſe you will eaſily recollect. They have afforded ample employment for the muſe, in all ages, and in all languages; and indeed the philoſopher and natural hiſtorian have found, in the real properties of this mountain, as ample a fund of ſpeculation, as the poets have done in the fictitious.—It is ſo often mentioned by the ancient

ancient writers, that it has been ſaid of Ætna as well as of Greece :

" Nullum eſt ſine nomine ſaxum."

Indeed, I am afraid this ſaying was much more applicable to it formerly than it is at preſent; for we even found ſeveral large mountains that had no name ; and it does not at all appear, that the number of philoſophers in Sicily have by any means increaſed in the later ages. Their ambition is now changed ; and if they can get a ſaint to keep the devils of Ætna in order, they trouble themſelves very little about the cauſe of its operations ; and do not value their iſland half ſo much for having given birth to Archimedes or Empedocles, as to St. Agatha and St. Roſolia.

The ancients, as well as the moderns, ſeem ever to have conſidered Ætna as one of the higheſt mountains on the globe. There

There are many paſſages in their authors that ſhew this; though, perhaps, none more ſtrongly than their making Deucalion and Pyrrha take refuge on the top of it, to ſave themſelves from the univerſal deluge *.

I ſhall now conclude this long account of mount Ætna with Virgil's celebrated deſcription of it in the third Æneid, which has been ſo much admired. You may compare it with the following deſcription of the famous poet Raitano, held, I aſſure you, in full as high eſtimation by the Sicilians.

" Nel mezzo verſo l'ethere avviccina
Ætna la fronte ſua cinta di orrori,
E con iſpavantevole rovina
Rimbomba, e con orribili fragori.

* Cataclyſmus, quod nos diluvium dicimus, cum factus eſt, omne genus humanum interiit præter Deucalionem et Pyrrham, qui in montem Ætnam qui altiſſimus in Sicilia eſſe dicitur fugerunt, &c. HIGINUS.

Sovente

Sovente negri nubi al ciel deſtina
Fumanti di atro turbine, e di ardori,
Ergi globbi di fiamma, e ſu lambiſce
Le ſtelle omai con infuocate ſtriſcie ;
Scogli, e divelte viſcere di monte
Erruttando tal volta avido eſtolle ;
E con gemiti vomita, e con onte
Liquifatti macigni, e in fondo bolle."

So ſings the Sicilian muſe ;—you will not however heſitate to give the preference to the Roman one, although the former is evidently ſtolen from her.

" ——— Horrificis juxta tonat Ætna ruinis,
Interdumque atram prorumpit ad æthera nubem,
Turbine fumantem piceo et candente favilla,
Attollitque globos flammarum, et ſidera lambit.
Interdumque ſcopulos, avolſaque viſcera montis
Erigit eructans, liquefactaque ſaxa ſub auras
Cum gemitu glomerat, fundoque exæſtuat imo."

But both theſe have been greatly out-done by the wonderful imagination of our great

great countryman Sir Richard Blackmore; who accounts at once for the whole phænomena of Ætna, by the ſimple idea of giving the mountain a fit of the colic: A thought that had eſcaped all the poets and philoſophers of antiquity, and ſeems for ever to have been reſerved for the profound genius of this great maſter and father of the Bathos.—I have forgot the paſſage; but you will find it, I think, in Prince Arthur.

The philoſophical poet, Lucretius, has likewiſe mentioned the eruptions of mount Ætna; but Pindar is the oldeſt poet we know of, that has taken any notice of them. His deſcription is, I think, the moſt ſatisfactory of all, and conveys a clearer idea both of the mountain itſelf, and an eruption of the mountain, than either the Roman or Sicilian poet, though it is not near ſo much laboured, nor worked

up

up with all that variety of circumſtances, they have found means to introduce. Its greateſt fault is, that Pindar had ſtill kept in view that abſurd idea of the ancients, that Jupiter had buried the giants under mount Ætna; and that their ſtruggling to get looſe, was the cauſe of its eruptions: But even this he touches but ſlightly, as if aſhamed to give ſuch a reaſon. The paſſage is tranſlated into Engliſh by Mr. Weſt.

" Now under ſmoking Cuma's ſulph'rous coaſt
And vaſt Sicilia, lies his tortur'd breaſt,
By ſnowy Ætna, nurſe of endleſs froſt,
The mighty prop of heaven for ever preſt,
Forth from whoſe flaming caverns iſſuing riſe
Tremendous fountains of pure liquid fire,
Which veil in ruddy miſts the noon-day ſkies,
While wrapt in ſmoke the eddying flames aſpire;
Or gleaming thro' the night with hideous roar,
Far o'er the red'ning main huge rocky fragments
pour."

This

This paſſage decides what has been much diſputed, that Ætna was, in theſe early ages, of as great an elevation as at preſent. It has been alleged, that volcanos always increaſe in height till they are extinguiſhed, when they are ſuppoſed to moulder down, and by degrees ſink into the caverns that are below them, like the aſtruni, and the ſolfaterra at Naples: However we find that Ætna was at that time, as now, covered with eternal ſnows, and was ſuppoſed, like Atlas, to be one of the great props of heaven. But what pleaſes me the moſt in this deſcription is, that it proves beyond the poſſibility of a doubt, that in theſe very remote eruptions, it was common for the lavas of Ætna to run a great way out to ſea.—The concluſion, I think, is fully as juſt, and perhaps not leſs ſublime, than the "avolſaque viſcera montis erigit eructans" of Virgil, which, I muſt own, I think rather

ther comes too near Sir Richard's fit of the colic.

Thucydides ſpeaks of three eruptions of this mountain; but is not ſo particular as we could have wiſhed. He does not mention the date of the firſt; but ſays, it was the earlieſt after the arrival of the Greeks in Sicily. The ſecond happened about the time of the 77th Olympiad, and the laſt in that of the 88th, which was nearly about the period when Pindar wrote; ſo that we cannot doubt that his deſcription is taken from the accounts he had heard of ſome of thoſe eruptions, the circumſtances of which, no doubt, at that time, had afforded matter of converſation all over Greece.

I think we may now try to take leave of Ætna, though I am afraid, during the remainder of our expedition, we ſhall meet with

with nothing worthy to ſucceed it.—We ſhall ſail from hence to-morrow morning; and expect to ſleep at Syracuſe, as it is only about fifty miles diſtant. I ſhall write to you again from the ruins of that celebrated city. Farewell.

Ever yours.

LETTER XII.

Syracuſe, June 1ſt.

ON the 31ſt of May we embarked on board a felucca, and ſet ſail for the mighty Syracuſe.—The wind was favourable, and for ſome time we went at a great rate. The view of Mount Ætna, for the whole of this little voyage, is wonderfully fine, and the bold black coaſt formed for near thirty miles of the lava of that immenſe volcano, gives the moſt awful idea of its eruptions. There is no part of this coaſt nearer than thirty miles to its ſummit; and yet there has hardly been any great eruption, where the lava has not reached the ſea, and driven back its waters to a great diſtance, leaving high rocks and promontories, that for ever ſet its waves at defiance, and preſcribe their utmoſt

utmoſt limits. What a tremendous ſcene muſt the meeting betwixt theſe adverſe elements have formed.

We may eaſily conceive the variety of changes this coaſt has undergone in the ſpace of ſome thouſands of years, as every great eruption muſt have made a conſiderable difference.—Virgil is wonderfully minute and exact in his geography of Sicily; and this is the only part of the iſland that ſeems to be materially altered ſince his time. He ſays there was a very large port at the foot of Ætna, where ſhips were ſecure from every wind;

" Portus ab acceſſu ventorum immotus et
" ingens;"

of which, at preſent, there are not the leaſt remains. It is probably the ſame that was called by the Sicilians the port of Ulyſſes; which is often mentioned by their writers. —The place of its exiſtence is ſtill ſhewn

betwixt three and four miles up the country, amongſt the lavas of Ætna. However, I can ſee no ſort of reaſon why they have called this the port of Ulyſſes: For ſurely Homer does not bring his hero near the precincts of mount Ætna. Indeed I think it is evident, that this volcano did not burn during the time of Homer, nor for ſome ages preceding it, otherwiſe it is not poſſible, that he would have ſaid ſo much of Sicily, without taking any notice of ſo great and capital an object, which, of all others, the daring and ſublime imagination of Homer would have been the moſt eager to graſp at.—It is evident, from this account, that Ulyſſes landed at the weſt end of Sicily, oppoſite to the iſland of Lachaea, now Favignana, almoſt two hundred miles diſtant from this port.

Virgil, with more judgment, lands his hero at the foot of Ætna, which gives him an opportunity of introducing ſome of

of the fineſt deſcription in the Æneid. But it is ſomewhat odd, that here he makes Æneas find one of Ulyſſes's companions, who had eſcaped the rage of Polyphemus, and had lived for ſeveral months in the woods and caverns of this mountain.—Virgil muſt have been aware of this impropriety, as he well knew that Homer had landed Ulyſſes, and placed the cave of Polyphemus at the moſt diſtant point of the iſland. But he could not prevail on himſelf to paſs Mount Ætna. He was ſo thoroughly convinced, that this was the moſt proper landing-place for an epic hero, as well as the moſt proper habitation for the Cyclops, that, by a bold poetical licence, he has fairly taken it for granted, that Homer really made it ſo. Indeed, in this paſſage, the pleaſure he affords to the imagination of his reader, makes an ample amends for his having impoſed on his judgment. But to return to our voyage.

The view of the mountain from the ſea is more complete and ſatisfactory than any where on the iſland. The eye takes in a greater portion of the circle, and you obſerve, with more diſtinctneſs, how it riſes equally on all ſides, from its immenſe baſe, overſpread with the beautiful little mountains I have mentioned; and at once can trace the progreſs of vegetation from its utmoſt luxuriance, to where it is checked by the two extremes of heat and of cold.—The different regions of the mountain are diſtinctly marked out, by their different colours, and different productions; expoſing at once to the raviſhed eye every climate, and every ſeaſon, with all their variety;

"Where bloſſoms, fruits, and flowers together riſe,
"And the whole year in gay confuſion lies."

The firſt region exhibits every object that characteriſes ſummer and autumn; the ſecond, thoſe of the moſt delightful ſpring; the third, an eternal and unrelenting winter;

ter; and the fourth, to complete the contraſt, the regions of unextinguiſhable fire.

The circumference of the great baſe of Ætna, Recupero told me, he had been at a good deal of pains to aſcertain; as it had generally been computed only at a hundred miles, or little more, although the radii of that circle had ever been eſteemed at thirty of thoſe miles; an abſurdity in computation that had put him upon making this inquiry. The reſult was, that taking the ſuppoſed diſtances of one place from another, all the way round, the ſum of the whole amounted to one hundred and eighty-three miles: an immenſe circle ſurely, and which is ſtill enlarged by every conſiderable eruption. The whole of this circle is formed of lava and burnt matter; and I have obſerved, that near the very outermoſt borders of it, there have been many little eruptions that have pierced through ſome of the thickeſt lavas of Ætna. Theſe ſmall

eruptions, at ſo vaſt a diſtance from the great furnace of the mountain, are probably occaſioned by the intenſe heat of the lava, which continues for many years rarifying the air in the caverns it has run over; which burſting forth from its priſon, the lava ſinks down, and, kindling the ſulphur and nitre with which theſe caverns are filled, exhibits in miniature the phænomena of a great eruption.

There is a large ſandy beach that extends from the mouth of the river Simetus, a great way to the ſouth of Catania, and was probably continued the whole way to the foot of the mountain of Taurominum (where there are ſtill ſome remains of the eaſt end of it), till it was broken in upon, many thouſand years ago, by the lavas of Ætna; which, from a flat ſandy ſhore, have now converted it into a high, bold, black, iron coaſt. What is a ſtrong proof of this; —in many places where they have ſunk deep

deep wells, after piercing through the lava, they have at laſt come to beds of ſhells and ſea ſand.

There is nothing elſe very intereſting in the voyage from Catania to Syracuſe. If you will read the concluſion of the third book of the Æneid, you will find a much better deſcription of it than any I can give you. The coaſt lies low, and, except Ætna, there are no very ſtriking objects.

We paſſed the mouths of ſeveral rivers; the firſt and moſt conſiderable is the Giarretta, or river of St. Paul, formerly the Simetus, and under that name celebrated by the poets. The nymph Thalia, after her amour with Jupiter, is ſuppoſed to have been changed into this ſtream: and, to avoid the reſentment of Juno, ſunk under ground near mount Ætna, and continued her ſubterraneous courſe to the ſea. This river was navigable in the time

of

of the Romans, and, Maſſa ſays, the only one in the iſland that was ſo.—It takes its riſe on the north ſide of Ætna, and, ſurrounding the weſt ſkirts of the mountain, falls into the ſea near the ruins of the ancient Morgantio. It no longer ſinks under ground as it did formerly; but it is now celebrated for a quality it does not appear to have poſſeſſed in the times of antiquity, as none of the old writers take notice of it. It throws up near its mouth great quantities of fine amber: this is carefully gathered by the peaſants in the neighbourhood, and brought to Catania, where it is manufactured into the form of croſſes, beads, ſaints, &c. and is ſold at high prices to the ſuperſtitious people on the continent. We bought ſeveral of theſe reſpectable figures, and found them electrical in a high degree; powerfully attracting feathers, ſtraws, and other light bodies; ſomewhat emblematical, you will ſay, of what they repreſent.—Some pieces of this amber contain

tain flies and other inſects curiouſly preſerved in its ſubſtance; and we were not a little entertained with the ingenuity of one of the artiſts, who has left a large blue-bottle-fly, with its wings expanded, exactly over the head of a ſaint, to repreſent, he told us, *lo ſpirito ſanto* deſcending upon him. I have got ſome fine pieces of this amber, more electric, I think, and emitting a ſtronger ſmell, than that which comes from the Baltic. The generation of this ſubſtance has long been a controverted point amongſt naturaliſts; nor do I believe it is as yet aſcertained, whether it is a ſea or a land production. It is generally ſuppoſed to be a kind of gum or bitumen, that iſſues from the earth in a liquid ſtate, at which time the flies and other inſects that light upon it are caught, and by their ſtruggles to get looſe, ſoon work themſelves into its ſubſtance, which hardening round them, they are for ever preſerved in the greateſt perfection. Large fine pieces are conſtantly found

found at the mouth of the Simetus, ſuppoſed to have been brought down by the river; but it is ſingular, that none of it is ever found any where but on the ſea-ſhore: they have likewiſe here a kind of artificial amber, made, I am told, from copal; but it is very different from the natural.

Not far from the mouth of this river there are two of the largeſt lakes in Sicily; the Beviere and the Pantana; the firſt of which is ſuppoſed to have been made by Hercules; in conſequence of which it was held ſacred by the ancients. They are full of a variety of fiſh; one ſpecies of which, called Molletti, is much eſteemed: the ſalting and exportation of theſe makes a conſiderable branch of commerce at Leontini, which is in that neighbourhood: that city is one of the moſt ancient in the iſland, and is ſuppoſed to have been the habitation of the Leſtrigons.

The

The Leontine fields have been much famed for their fertility: both Diodorus and Pliny aſſert that they yielded wheat an hundred-fold, and that grain grew ſponta-neouſly here without culture: but this was only during the reign of Ceres, and is not now the caſe.

In a few hours ſailing we came in ſight of the city of Auguſta, which is beautifully ſituated in a ſmall iſland that was formerly a peninſula: it was therefore called by the Greeks Cherſoneſus. Both the city and fortifications ſeem conſiderable, and are ſaid to contain about 9000 inhabitants. The ruins of the Little Hybla, ſo celebrated for its honey, lie within a few miles of this place.

Some time before our arrival at Syracuſe, it fell a dead calm, and we ſpied a fine turtle faſt aſleep on the ſurface of the water. Our pilot ordered a profound ſilence, and only

only two oars to row very gently, that if poſſible we might ſurpriſe him.—Every thing was put in order, and two men were placed ready at the prow to ſecure the prize.—We were all attention and expectation, and durſt hardly breathe for fear of diſturbing him.

We moved ſlowly on, and the turtle lay ſtone-ſtill; the two men bent down their bodies, and had their arms already in the water to ſeize him.—No alderman, with all deference be it ſpoken, ever beheld his turtle upon the table with more pleaſure and ſecurity; nor feaſted his imagination more luſciouſly upon the banquet.—He was already our own in idea, and we were only thinking of the various ways in which he ſhould be dreſſed:—when—how vain and tranſitory all human poſſeſſions! the turtle made a plunge, ſlipped through their fingers, and diſappeared in a moment, and with him all our hopes.—We looked very

fooliſh

fooliſh at each other, without uttering a word, till Fullarton aſked me in the moſt provoking manner in the world, whether I would chuſe a little of the callipaſh or the callipee.—The two men ſhrugged up their ſhoulders, and ſaid *Pazienza;* but Glover told them in a rage, that all the pazienza on earth was not equal to a good turtle.

Soon after this, the remains of the great Syracuſe appeared; the remembrance of whoſe glory, magnificence, and illuſtrious deeds both in arts and arms, made us for ſome time even forget our turtle. But, alas! how are the mighty fallen! This proud city, that vied with Rome itſelf, is now reduced to a heap of rubbiſh; for what remains of it deſerves not the name of a city. We rowed round the greateſt part of its walls without ſeeing a human creature; thoſe very walls that were the terror of the Roman arms;

from whence Archimedes battered their fleets, and with his engines lifted their veſſels out of the ſea, and daſhed them againſt the rocks. We found the interior part of the city agree but too well with its external appearance. There was not an inn to be found; and after viſiting all the monaſteries and religious fraternities in ſearch of beds, we found the whole of them ſo wretchedly mean and dirty, that we preferred at laſt to ſleep on ſtraw; but even that we could not have clean, but are eat up with vermin of every kind.

We had letters for the Count Gaetano, who made an apology that he could not lodge us, but in other reſpects ſhewed us many civilities; particularly in giving us the uſe of his carriage, in explaining the ruins, in pointing out every thing that was worthy of our attention; and likewiſe in giving us letters of recommendation for Malta. He is a gentleman of good ſenſe,

and

and has written ſeveral treatiſes on the antiquities of Sicily.

Of the four cities that compoſed the ancient Syracuſe, there remains only Ortigia, by much the ſmalleſt, ſituated in the iſland of that name. It is about two miles round, and ſuppoſed to contain about 14,000 inhabitants. The ruins of the other three, Tycha, Acradina, and Neapoli, are computed at twenty-two miles in circumference, but almoſt the whole of this ſpace is now converted into rich vineyards, orchards, and corn-fields; the walls of theſe are indeed every where built with broken marbles full of engravings and inſcriptions, but moſt of them defaced and ſpoiled. The principal remains of antiquity are a theatre and amphitheatre; many ſepulchres, the Latomie, the Catacombs, and the famous ear of Dionyſius, which it was impoſſible to deſtroy.—The Latomie now makes a no-

ble ſubterraneous garden, and is indeed one of the moſt beautiful and romantic ſpots I ever beheld. Moſt of it is about one hundred feet below the level of the earth, and of an incredible extent. The whole is hewn out of a rock as hard as marble, compoſed of a concretion of ſhells, gravel, and other marine bodies. The bottom of this immenſe quarry, from whence probably the greateſt part of Syracuſe was built, is now covered with an exceeding rich ſoil; and as no wind from any point of the compaſs can touch it, it is filled with a great variety of the fineſt ſhrubs and fruit-trees, which bear with vaſt luxuriance, and are never blaſted. The oranges, citrons, bergamots, pomegranates, figs, &c. are all of a remarkable ſize and fine quality. Some of theſe trees, but more particularly the olives, grow out of the hard rock, where there is no viſible ſoil, and exhibit a very uncommon and pleaſing appearance.

There is a variety of wild and romantic ſcenes in this curious garden; in the midſt of which we were ſurpriſed by the appearance of a figure under one of the caverns, that added greatly to the dignity and ſolemnity of the place.—It was that of an aged man, with a long flowing white beard that reached down to his middle. His old wrinkled face and ſcanty grey locks pronounced him a member of ſome former age as well as of this. His hands, which were ſhook by the palſy, held a ſort of pilgrim's ſtaff; and about his neck there was a ſtring of large beads with a crucifix hanging to its end.—Had it not been for theſe marks of his later exiſtence, I don't know but I ſhould have aſked him, whether, in his youth, he had not been acquainted with Theocritus and Archimedes, and if he did not remember the reign of Dionyſius the tyrant. But he ſaved us the trouble, by telling us he was the hermit of the place, and belonged to a convent of

Capuchins on the rock above; that he had now bid adieu to the upper world, and was determined to ſpend the reſt of his life in this ſolitude, in prayer for the wretched mortals that inhabit it.

This figure, together with the ſcene in which it appears, are indeed admirably well adapted, and reflect a mutual dignity upon each other. We left ſome money upon the rock:—For the Capuchins, who are the greateſt beggars on earth, never touch money, but ſave their too tender conſciences, and preſerve their vows unbroken, by the ſimple device of lifting it with a pair of pincers, and carrying it to market in their ſack or cowl. This I have ſeen more than once.—We were much delighted with the Latomie, and left it with regret: It is the very ſame that has been ſo much celebrated by Cicero about 1800 years ago: "Opus "eſt ingens (ſays he) magnificum regum, "ac tyrannorum. Totum ex ſaxo in mi-

"randam

" randam altitudinem depreſſo, &c." A little to the weſt of it is ſuppoſed to have ſtood the country-houſe, the ſale of which you will remember he gives ſo lively and pleaſant an account of; by which a gold-ſmith (I have forgot his name) cheated a Roman nobleman in a very ingenious manner.

The ear of Dionyſius is no leſs a monument of the ingenuity and magnificence, than of the cruelty, of that tyrant. It is a huge cavern cut out of the hard rock, in the form of the human ear. The perpendicular height of it is about 80 feet, and the length of this enormous ear is not leſs than 250. The cavern was ſaid to be ſo contrived, that every ſound made in it, was collected and united into one point, as into a focus; this was called the Tympanum; and exactly oppoſite to it the tyrant had made a ſmall hole, which communicated with a little apartment where he uſed to

conceal himſelf. He applied his own ear to this hole, and is ſaid to have heard diſtinctly every word that was ſpoken in the cavern below. This apartment was no ſooner finiſhed, and a proof of it made, than he put to death all the workmen that had been employed in it. He then confined all that he ſuſpected were his enemies; and by over-hearing their converſation, judged of their guilt, and condemned and acquitted accordingly.

As this chamber of Dionyſius is very high in the rock, and now totally inacceſſible, we had it not in our power to make proof of this curious experiment, which our guides told us had been done ſome years ago by the captain of an Engliſh ſhip.

The echo in the ear is prodigious; much ſuperior to any other cavern I have ſeen. The holes in the rock, to which the priſoners were chained, ſtill remain, and even the

the lead and iron in ſeveral of them. We ſurpriſed a poor young porcupine who had come here to drink, of whom our guides made lawful prize.—Near to this there are caverns of a great extent, where they carry on a manufactory of nitre, which is found in vaſt abundance on the ſides of theſe caves.

The amphitheatre is in the form of a very excentric ellipſe, and is much ruined; but the theatre is ſo entire, that moſt of the gradini or ſeats ſtill remain. Both theſe are in that part of the city that was called Neapoli, or the New City. "Quarta au-" tem eſt urbs (ſays Cicero) quæ quia poſ-" trema ædificata eſt, Neapolis nominatur, " quam ad ſummam theatrum eſt maxi-" mum, &c." However, it is but a ſmall theatre in compariſon of that of Taurominum. We ſearched amongſt the ſepulchres, ſeveral of which are very elegant, for that of Archimedes; but could ſee no-

thing reſembling it.—At his own deſire it was adorned with the figure of a ſphere inſcribed in a cylinder, but had been loſt by his ungrateful countrymen, even before the time that Cicero was quæſtor of Sicily. It is pleaſant to obſerve, with what eagerneſs this great man undertakes the ſearch of it, and with what exultation he deſcribes his triumph on the diſcovery. "Ego autem cum omnia colluſtrarem ocu-
"lis (eſt enim ad portas Agragianas magna
"frequentia ſepulchrorum) animadverti
"columnellam non multum e dumis emi-
"nentem, in qua inerat ſphæræ figura et
"cylindri. Atque ego ſtatim Syracuſanis
"(erant autem principes mecum) dixi, me
"illud ipſum arbitrari eſſe quod quærerem.
"Immiſſi cum falcibus multi purgarunt, et
"aperuerunt locum: quo cum patefactus
"eſſet aditus ad adverſam baſim acceſſimus;
"apparebat epigramma exeſis poſterioribus
"partibus verſiculorum dimidiatis fere: Ita
"nobiliſſima Græciæ civitas, quondam vero

"etiam

" etiam doctiſſima ſui civis unius acutiſſimi
" monumentum ignoraſſet, niſi ab homine
" Arpinate didiciſſet, &c."

The Catacombs are a great work; little inferior either to thoſe of Rome or Naples, and in the ſame ſtyle. There are many remains of temples. The Duke of Montalbano, who has written on the antiquities of Syracuſe, reckons near twenty; but there is hardly any of theſe that are now diſtinguiſhable. A few fine columns of that of Jupiter Olympus ſtill remain; and the temple of Minerva (now converted into the cathedral of the city, and dedicated to the Virgin) is almoſt entire. They have lately built a new façade to it; but I am afraid they have not improved on the ſimplicity of the antique. It is full of broken pediments, and I think in a bad ſtyle.

Ortigia, the only remaining part of Syracuſe, was anciently an iſland; it is often

denominated ſuch by Virgil, Cicero, and many of the Greek and Latin hiſtorians. In latter ages, and probably by the ruins of this mighty city, the ſtrait that ſeparated it from the continent, was filled up; and it had now been a peninſula for many ages; till the preſent king of Spain, at a vaſt expence, cut through the neck of land that joined it to Sicily, and has again reduced it to its primitive ſtate.

Here he has raiſed a noble fortification, which appears to be almoſt impregnable. There are four ſtrong gates, one within the other, with each a glacis, covered way, ſcarp and counterſcarp, and a broad deep ditch filled with ſea-water, and defended by an immenſe number of—embraſures;—but not ſo much as one ſingle piece of artillery. This you will no doubt think ridiculous enough, but the ridicule is ſtill heightened, when I aſſure you there is not a cannon of any kind belonging to this noble

noble fortreſs, but one ſmall battery of ſix pounders for ſaluting ſhips that go in and out of the port. If you are at a loſs to account for this, you will pleaſe remember that it is a work of the king of Spain. However, the ditches are very uſeful; they are perpetually covered with fiſhing-boats; and they can uſe their nets and lines here with the greateſt ſucceſs, even in the moſt ſtormy weather; though I dare ſay this was none of the motives that induced his majeſty to make them. The nobility of the place have likewiſe barges here, for their amuſement.

As the celebrated fountain of Arethuſa has ever been looked upon as one of the greateſt curioſities of Syracuſe, you may believe we were not a little impatient to examine it: And indeed only by obſerving Cicero's account of it *, we ſoon found it out.

* In hac inſula extrema eſt fons aquæ dulcis, cui nomen Arethuſa eſt, incredibili magnitudine pleniſ-

ſimus

out.—It ſtill exactly anſwers the deſcription he gives, except with regard to the great quantities of fiſh it contained, which ſeem now to have abandoned it.

The fountain of Arethuſa was dedicated to Diana, who had a magnificent temple near it, where great feſtivals were annually celebrated in honour of the goddeſs. We found a number of nymphs, up to the knees in the fountain, buſy waſhing their garments, and we dreaded the fate of Actæon and Alpheus: but if theſe were of Diana's train, they are by no means ſo coy as they were of old; and a man would hardly chuſe to run the riſk of being changed either into a ſtag or a river for the beſt of them.

It is indeed an aſtoniſhing fountain; and riſes at once out of the earth, to the ſize

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ſimus piſcium, qui fluctu totus operiretur, niſi munitione, ac mole lapidum a mari disjunctus eſſet, &c. Cic.

of

of a river.—The poetical fictions concerning it are too well known to require that I ſhould enumerate them. Many of the people here believe to this day, that it is the identical river Arethuſa, that ſinks under ground near Olympia in Greece, and, continuing its courſe for five or ſix hundred miles below the ocean, riſes again in this ſpot.

It is truly aſtoniſhing that ſuch a ſtory as this ſhould have gained ſuch credit amongſt the ancients; for it is not only their poets, but natural hiſtorians and philoſophers too, that take notice of it. Pliny mentions it more than once; and there are few or none of the Latin poets that it has eſcaped.

This ſtrange belief has been communicated to the Sicilian authors, and, what is amazing, there is hardly any of them that doubts of it.—Pomponius Mela, Pauſanias, Maſſa, and Fazzello, are all of the ſame ſenti-

ſentiments; to ſupport which they tell you the old ſtory of the golden cup won at the Olympic games, which was thrown into the Grecian Arethuſa, and was ſoon after caſt up again by the Sicilian one.

They likewiſe add, that it had always been obſerved that after the great ſacrifices at Olympia, the blood of which fell into that river, the waters of Arethuſa roſe for ſeveral days tinged with blood.

This, like many modern miracles, was probably a trick of the prieſts.—Thoſe of Diana had the charge of the fountain of Arethuſa, and no doubt were much intereſted to ſupport the credit of the ſtory; for it was that goddeſs that converted the nymph Arethuſa into a river, and conducted her by ſubterraneous paſſages from Greece to Sicily, to avoid the purſuit of Alpheus, who underwent the ſame fate.

At

At a little diſtance from the fountain of Arethuſa, there is a very large ſpring of freſh water, that boils up in the ſea. It is called *Occhi di Zilica*, and by ſome Alpheus, who is ſuppoſed by the poets to have purſued Arethuſa below the ſea all the way to Sicily.

As this ſpring is not taken notice of by any of the great number of the ancients that ſpeak of Arethuſa, it is moſt probable that it did not then exiſt; and is a part of that fountain that has ſince burſt out before its arrival at the iſland of Ortigia. Had it been viſible in the time of the Greeks, there is no doubt that they would have made uſe of this, as a ſtrong argument to prove the ſubmarine journey of Arethuſa; as it in fact riſes at ſome diſtance in the ſea, and pretty much in the ſame direction that Greece lies from Ortigia. It ſometimes boils up ſo ſtrongly, that after piercing

piercing the ſalt water, I am told it can be taken up very little affected by it.

Syracuſe has two harbours; the largeſt of which, on the ſouth weſt ſide of Ortigia, is reckoned ſix miles round, and was eſteemed one of the beſt in the Mediterranean. It is ſaid by Diodorus to have run almoſt into the heart of the city, and was called Marmoreo, becauſe entirely ſurrounded with buildings of marble; the entry into this harbour was ſtrongly fortified, and the Roman fleets could never penetrate into it.

The ſmall port is on the north eaſt of Ortigia, and is likewiſe recorded to have been highly ornamented. Fazzello ſays, there is ſtill the remains of a ſubmarine aqueduct, that runs through the middle of it, which was intended to convey the water from the fountain of Arethuſa to the other parts of the city.

Near

Near this port, they ſhew the ſpot where Archimedes' houſe ſtood; and likewiſe the tower from whence he is ſaid to have ſet fire to the Roman galleys with his burning glaſſes; a ſtory which is related by ſeveral authors, but which is now almoſt univerſally exploded, from the difficulty to conceive a burning-glaſs, or a concave ſpeculum, with a focus of ſuch an immenſe length as this muſt have required.

However, I ſhould be apt to imagine, if this be not entirely a fiction (of which there is ſome probability), that it was neither performed by refracting burning-glaſſes nor ſpeculums, but only by means of common looking-glaſſes, or very clear plates of metal. Indeed, from the ſituation of the place it muſt have been done by reflection; for Archimedes' tower ſtood on the north of the little port where the Roman fleet are ſaid to have been moored; ſo that their

veſſels lay in a right line betwixt him and the ſun at noon; and at a very ſmall diſtance from the wall of the city where this tower ſtood. But if you will ſuppoſe this to have been performed by common burning-glaſſes, or by thoſe of the parabolical kind, it will be neceſſary to raiſe a tower of a moſt enormous height on the iſland of Ortigia, in order to interpoſe theſe glaſſes betwixt the ſun and the Roman galleys; and even this could not have been done till late in the afternoon, when his rays are exceedingly weak. But I have very little doubt that common looking-glaſſes would be found all-ſufficient to perform theſe effects.

Let us ſuppoſe that a thouſand of theſe were made to reflect the rays to the ſame point: The heat, in all probability, muſt be increaſed to a greater degree than in the focus of moſt burning-glaſſes; and abun-

abundantly capable of ſetting fire to every combuſtible ſubſtance.—This experiment might be eaſily made by means of a battalion of men, arming each with a looking-glaſs inſtead of a firelock; and ſetting up a board at two or three hundred yards diſtance for them to fire at. I ſuppoſe it would take a conſiderable time before they were expert at this exerciſe; but, by practice, I have no doubt that they might all be brought to hit the mark inſtantaneouſly at the word of command; like the lark-catchers in ſome countries, who are ſo dexterous at this manœuvre, that with a ſmall mirrour they throw the rays of light on the lark, let her be ever ſo high in the air; which, by a kind of faſcination, brings down the poor animal to the ſnare.

You may laugh at all this; but I don't think it is impoſſible that a looking-glaſs may one day be thought as neceſſary an implement for a ſoldier as at preſent it is

for a beau. I am very apprehenſive the French will get the ſtart of us in this ſignal invention; as I have been aſſured long ago, that few of their men ever go to the field, without firſt providing themſelves with one of theſe little warlike engines, the true uſe of which, happily for us, they are as yet unacquainted with. You will eaſily perceive, that if this experiment ſucceeds, it muſt alter the whole ſyſtem of fortification as well as of attack and defence; for every part of the city that is expoſed to the view of the beſiegers, may be eaſily ſet in a flame; and the beſieged would have the ſame advantage over the camp of the beſieging army *.

* Since the writing of theſe letters, the author has been informed, that Mr. Buffon actually made this experiment.—He conſtructed a kind of frame, in which were fixed four hundred ſmall mirrours, diſpoſed in ſuch a manner, that the rays reflected from each of them fell exactly on the ſame point. By means of this he melted lead at the diſtance of 120 feet, and ſet fire to a hayſtack at a much greater diſtance.

We are already completely tired of Syracuſe, which of all the wretched places we have yet met with, is by many degrees the moſt wretched:—For beſides that its inhabitants are ſo extremely poor and beggarly, many of them are ſo over-run with the itch, that we are under perpetual apprehenſions, and begin to be extremely well ſatisfied that we could not procure beds.—It is truly melancholy to think of the diſmal contraſt that its former magnificence makes with its preſent meanneſs. The mighty Syracuſe, the moſt opulent and powerful of all the Grecian cities, which, by its own proper ſtrength alone, was able, at different times, to contend againſt all the power of Carthage and of Rome:—Which is recorded (what the force of united nations is now incapable of) to have repulſed fleets of two thouſand ſail, and armies of two hundred thouſand men; and contained within its own walls, what

no city ever did before or ſince, fleets and armies that were the terror of the world. This haughty and magnificent city, reduced even below the conſequence of the moſt inſignificant burgh!—"Sic tranſit gloria "mundi."—I have not even been able to procure a table to write upon, but by way of ſuccedaneum am obliged to lay a form over the back of two chairs.—We have got into the moſt wretched hovel you can conceive, and the moſt dirty; but what is ſtill worſt of all, we can find nothing to eat; and if we had not brought ſome cold fowls along with us, we might have ſtarved.

The heat has been conſiderably greater here than at Catania. The thermometer is juſt now at 78.—There is an old remark made on the climate of this place by ſome of the ancients; which is ſtill ſaid to hold good: that at no ſeaſon, the ſun has ever been

been inviſible during a whole day at Syracuſe. I find it mentioned by ſeveral Sicilian authors, but ſhall not vouch for the truth of it.—Adieu.—My next will probably be from Malta; for we ſhall ſail to-morrow, if it be poſſible to procure a veſſel.

Ever yours.

LETTER XIII.

Capo Paſſero, June 3.

AS we found the mighty city of Syracuſe ſo reduced, that it could not afford beds and lodging to three weary travellers, we agreed to abridge our ſtay in it; and accordingly hired a Malteſe Sparonaro to carry us to that iſland: This is a ſmall ſix-oar'd boat, made entirely for ſpeed, to avoid the African pirates, and other Barbareſque veſſels, with which theſe ſeas are infeſted; but ſo flat and ſo narrow, that they are not able to bear any ſea, and of conſequence keep always as near the coaſt as poſſible.

On the 2d of June, by day-break, we left the Marmoreo, or great port of Syracuſe: and although the wind was exactly contrary

contrary and pretty ſtrong, by the force of their oars, which they manage with great dexterity, we got on at the rate of four miles an hour. They do not pull their oars as we do, but puſh them like the Venetian Gondoliers; always fronting the prow of the boat, and ſeldom or never ſit down while they row; allowing the whole weight of their bodies to be exerted every ſtroke of the oar. This gives a prodigious momentum, and is certainly much more forcible than a ſimple exertion of the muſcles of the arm.

About ten o'clock the wind became favourable, when we went indeed at an immenſe rate. At twelve it blew a hurricane, and with ſome difficulty we got under ſhore, but the wind was ſo exceedingly violent, that even there we had like to have been overſet, and we were obliged to run aground to ſave us from that diſaſter. Here we were a good deal annoyed by the ſand carried about

about by the wind; however, the hurricane was ſoon over, and we again put to ſea with a favourable gale, which in a few hours carried us to Capo Paſſero.

In this little ſtorm we were a good deal amuſed with the behaviour of our Sicilian ſervant, who at land is a fellow of undaunted courage, of which we have had many proofs; but here (I don't know why) it entirely forſook him, although there was in fact no real danger, for we never were more than 100 yards from the ſhore. He gave himſelf up to deſpair, and called upon all his ſaints for protection: And never again recovered his confidence all the reſt of this little voyage; perpetually wiſhing himſelf back at Naples, and ſwearing that no earthly temptation ſhould ever induce him to go to ſea again. The ſame fellow, but a few days ago, mounted a moſt vicious horſe, and without the leaſt fear or concern galloped along the ſide of a precipice, where every

every moment we expected to see him dashed to pieces; so singular and various are the different modes of fear and of courage.

Capo Passero, anciently called Pachinus, is the remotest and most southerly point of Sicily. It is not a peninsula, as represented in all the maps, but a wretched barren island, of about a mile round; with a fort and a small garrison to protect the neighbouring country from the incursions of the Barbary corsairs, who are often very troublesome on this part of the coast. This little island and fort lie about a mile and a half distant from the small creek of which we have taken possession, and are separated from the rest of Sicily by a strait of about half a mile broad.

Our pilot told us that we must not think of Malta, which is almost 100 miles off, till there were more settled appearances of good weather.

As

As there is no habitation here of any kind, we ſearched about, till at laſt we found a ſmall cavern, where we made a very comfortable dinner. We then ſallied forth to examine the face of the country, as well as to try if we could ſhoot ſomething for our ſupper.—We found that we had now got into a very different world from any thing we had yet ſeen. The country here is exceedingly barren, and to a conſiderable diſtance produces neither corn nor wine: But the fields are adorned with an infinite variety of flowers and of flowering ſhrubs, and the rocks are every where entirely covered with capers, which are juſt now fit for gathering. If we had vinegar, we could ſoon have pickled hogſheads of them.

We found here, in the greateſt perfection, that beautiful ſhrub called the Palmeta, reſembling a ſmall palm-tree, with an elegant fine flower: But, to our great mortification,

tion, the ſeed is not yet ripe. We likewiſe found great quantities of a blue everlaſting flower, which I don't remember to have ſeen in Miller, or any of our botanical books. The ſtem riſes about a foot high, and is crowned with a large cluſter of ſmall blue flowers, the leaves of which are of a dry ſubſtance like the Elychryſum, or globe Amaranthus. Some of theſe are of a purple colour, but moſt of them blue. I have gathered a pretty large quantity for the ſpeculation of the botaniſts on our return.

We found a good ſwimming-place, which is always one of the firſt things we look out for, as this exerciſe conſtitutes one of the principal pleaſures of our expedition.

As ſoon as it was dark, we got on board our little boat, and rowed about a hundred yards out to ſea, where we caſt anchor; our pilot aſſuring us that this was abſolutely neceſſary, as the people in this part of the country

country are little better than ſavages; and, were we to ſtay at land, might very poſſibly come down during the night, and rob and murder us.

He likewiſe told us, that the Turks had made frequent invaſions upon this point of the iſland, which, of all others, lay moſt expoſed to their depredations; that lately three of their chebecks ran into a ſmall harbour a few miles from this, and carried off ſix merchant-ſhips; and that very often ſome of their light veſſels were ſeen hovering off the coaſt; that the only way to be in perfect ſecurity from theſe two enemies by ſea and land, was to chuſe a place on the coaſt ſo deep, that the banditti by land could not wade in to us; and at the ſame time ſo ſhallow, as to be equally inacceſſible to the banditti by ſea.

When we found ourſelves thus in ſecurity on both hands, we wrapt ourſelves up

in our cloaks, and fell aſleep: however, we had but a very uncomfortable night; the wind roſe, and the motion of our little bark was exceeding diſagreeable, and made us heartily ſick. As ſoon as day began to appear, we made them pull into ſhore; when we were immediately cured of our ſickneſs; and as the weather continues ſtill unfavourable, we have fallen upon a variety of amuſements to paſs the time.

We have been thrice in the water, which is warm and pleaſant; and in the intervals, I have written you this letter on the top of a large baſket, in which we carry our ſea-ſtore. We have likewiſe gathered ſhells, pieces of coral, of ſpunge, and ſeveral beautiful kinds of ſea-weed. The rocks here are all of ſand and gravel run together, and become as hard as granite. There are many ſhells and other marine ſubſtances mixed in their compoſition, which renders them objects of curioſity in the eye of a naturaliſt.

This

This morning we made a kind of tent of a ſail, drawn over the point of a rock, and fixed with an oar, by way of pole. Here we breakfaſted moſt luxurioufly on excellent tea and honey of Hybla.

I was interrupted in this part of my letter, by an officer from the fort of Capo Paſſero. He tells us, that we may give over all thoughts of getting farther for theſe ſix days.—What do you think is his reaſon?—I own I was in ſome pain till he mentioned it.—This wind ſet in exactly as the moon entered her ſecond quarter, and it will certainly continue till ſhe is full. There is a raſcal for you!—If he be telling truth, I ſhall certainly ſtudy aſtrology. He likewiſe told us, that two galliots had been ſeen off the coaſt; and deſired us to be upon our guard; but I own, the moon, together with other circumſtances, has conſiderably weakened his evidence with me.

We

We have learned from his converſation, that the fort of Capo Paſſero is made uſe of as a place of exile for the delinquents in the army; of which number I have not the leaſt doubt that he is one. He told us there were two near relations of the viceroy, that had been lately ſent there for miſdemeanors; that for his part, he belonged to a very agreeable garriſon; but as he loved retirement, he choſe to accompany them. However, his countenance told a very different ſtory; and ſaid, in ſtrong language, that he was a *tres mauvais ſujet*. Beſides, he is a ſtupid fellow, and has tired me. I could learn nothing from him.

It muſt be owned, this is an excellent place of exile for a young rake, who wants to ſhew away in the beau monde. It is not within many miles of any town or village; ſo that the gentlemen may enjoy retirement in its utmoſt perfection.

We were ſurpriſed to find on this coaſt quantities of the true pumice-ſtone, which at firſt we ſuppoſed to have been brought by the ſea from Ætna, till we likewiſe diſcovered many large pieces of lava, which makes us imagine there muſt have been ſome eruption of fire in this part of the iſland; yet I ſee no conical mountain, or any other indication of it.

If our officer's prognoſtications prove true, and we are detained here any longer, I ſhall examine the country to a much greater diſtance. The wind continues directly contrary; the ſea is very high in the canal of Malta, and our Sicilian ſervant is in a ſad trepidation.—But I ſee Glover and Fullarton coming for their dinner; ſo I ſhall be obliged to give up the baſket.—This ſea-air gives one a monſtrous appetite; and it is with grief I mention it, we are already brought to ſhort allowance:—Only one cold fowl among three

of us; all three pretty ſharp ſet, I aſſure you.—Thoſe infamous raſcals, to loſe our turtle!—They have ſpied a fiſhing boat, and are hailing her as loud as they can roar, —but, alas! ſhe is too far off to hear them.—They have juſt fired a gun to bring her to, and happily ſhe obeys the ſignal, ſo there are ſtill hopes; otherwiſe we ſhall ſoon be reduced to bread and water. Our tea and ſugar too are juſt upon a cloſe, which is the cruelleſt article of all; but we have plenty of good bread and Hybla honey; ſo we are in no danger of ſtarving.

We have likewiſe made an admirable and a very comfortable diſpoſition for our night's lodging. The Sparonaro is ſo very narrow, that it is impoſſible for us all to lie in it; beſides, we are eat up with vermin, and have nothing but the hard boards to lie on: all theſe conſiderations, added to the curſed ſwinging of the boat, and the horrid ſickneſs it occaſions, have

determined us rather to truſt ourſelves to the mercy of the banditti, than to lie another night at ſea: beſides, we have made the happieſt diſcovery in the world; a great quantity of fine, ſoft, dry ſea-weed; lying under the ſhelter of a rock, and ſeems intended by Providence for our bed: Over this we are going to ſtretch a ſail, and expect to ſleep moſt luxurioufly; but to prevent all danger from a ſurpriſe, we have agreed to ſtand centry by turns, with Fullarton's double barrelled gun, well primed and loaded for the reception of the enemy; at the firſt diſcharge of which, and not before, the whole guard is to turn out, with all the remaining part of our artillery and ſmall arms; and as our ſituation is a very advantageous one, I think we ſhall be able to make a ſtout defence.

As we are ſix in number, three maſters and three ſervants, the duty, you ſee, will be but trifling; and five of us will always

ſleep

ſleep in ſecurity. Our guard, to be ſure, might have been ſtronger; but our Sparonaro men have abſolutely refuſed to be of the party; having much more confidence in their own element; however, they have promiſed, in caſe of an attack, immediately to come to our aſſiſtance. I think the diſpoſition is far from being a bad one, and we are not a little vain of our generalſhip.

The fiſhing boat is now arrived, and they have bought ſome excellent little fiſhes, which are already on the fire. Adieu. Theſe fellows are roaring for their cold fowl, and I can command the baſket no longer.

Ever yours.

LETTER XIV.

Malta, June 4th.

IN ſpite of appearances, and our officer's wife prognoſtications, the wind changed in the afternoon, and we got under ſail by ſix o'clock: we paſſed the Straits, and coaſted along till eight, when we landed to cook ſome macaroni we had purchaſed of our ſailors, and try if we could ſhoot ſomething for ſea-ſtore, as we have ſtill a long voyage before us.

We came to the ſide of a ſulphurous lake, the ſmell of which was ſo ſtrong, that we perceived it upwards of a mile diſtant. We found the water boiling up with violence in many places, though the heat at the banks of the lake is very inconſiderable. However, this, added to the pumice and lava we found near Capo Paſſero, tends greatly to confirm us in the opinion, that this

this part of the iſland, as well as about Ætna, has, in former ages, been ſubject to eruptions of fire.

I think it is more than probable, that this is the celebrated Camerina, which Æneas ſaw immediately after his paſſing Pachinus (or Capo Paſſero) which, Virgil ſays, the Fates had decreed ſhould never be drained:

" Hinc altas cautes projectaque ſaxa Pachyni
" Radimus; et fatis nunquam conceſſa moveri
" Adparet Camarina procul."

Virgil had good reaſon to ſay ſo; for the level of the lake or marſh (it being ſomething betwixt the two) is at leaſt as low as that of the ſea, and conſequently never could be drained.

It is ſurrounded with a variety of fine evergreens and flowering ſhrubs, of which the palmeta, and the arbutus or ſtrawberry tree, are the moſt beautiful. We ſaw a great many wild-fowl; but, what ſurpriſed

me, in ſo unfrequented a place, they were ſo ſhy, that there was no getting near them; there was one kind, in particular, that attracted our attention; it was of the ſize and form of a grey plover, and flew in the ſame manner; but had a tail of a great length, which ſeemed to be compoſed only of two ſmall flexible feathers that made a very uncommon appearance in the air. After uſing all our art to ſhoot one of them, we were obliged to give up the attempt.

Here we killed a ſmall black ſnake, which I think, anſwers the deſcription I have ſeen of the aſp. We diſſected out its tongue, the end of which appears ſharp like a ſting, and I ſuppoſe is one, as it darted it out with violence againſt our ſticks, when we preſented them to it. Now as all animals, when attacked, make uſe of thoſe weapons that nature has armed them with for their defence, it appeared evident to us (ſuppoſing this rule a juſt one) that this animal

was

was conſcious of a power of hurting in its tongue; and we have been more fully convinced of it from diſſection. The ſting appears conſiderably larger than that of a bee. We found a little bag at the other end of the tongue, and probably, if we had had a microſcope, ſhould have found the tongue perforated. This ſnake had no teeth; but very hard gums. I have taken care to preſerve the tongue for your inſpection.

As I think it has always been ſuppoſed, that ſerpents hurt only with their teeth, I thought this might be worthy of your notice. It is true, that the darting out of the tongue is a trick of the whole ſerpent tribe; but this animal ſeemed to do it with peculiar ferocity, and to ſtrike it with violence againſt our ſticks. It was this that put us upon the examination.

I don't recollect that this ſingularity is mentioned in any book of natural hiſtory, but

but poſſibly I may be miſtaken; nor indeed do I remember either to have ſeen or heard of any animal armed in this manner:—unleſs you will ſuppoſe me to adopt the ſentiments of poor Mr. S——, who, ever ſince his marriage, alleges that the tongues of many females are formed after this ſingular manner: and remarks one peculiarity, that the ſting ſeldom or never appears till after matrimony.—He is very learned on this ſubject, and thinks it may poſſibly have proceeded from their original connexion with the ſerpent.—Let this be as it may, I ſincerely hope that you and I ſhall never have ſuch good reaſon for adopting that opinion.

A little after nine we embarked. The night was delightful; but the wind had died away about ſun-ſet, and we were obliged to ply our oars to get into the canal of Malta. The coaſt of Sicily began to recede; and in a ſhort time, we found our-

ſelves

ſelves in the ocean. There was a profound ſilence, except the noiſe of the waves breaking on the diſtant ſhore, which only ſerved to render it more ſolemn. It was a dead calm, and the moon ſhone bright on the waters. The waves from the late ſtorm, were ſtill high; but ſmooth and even, and followed one another with a ſlow and equal pace. The ſcene had naturally ſunk us into meditation; we had remained near an hour without ſpeaking a word, when our ſailors began their midnight hymn to the Virgin. The muſic was ſimple, ſolemn, and melancholy, and in perfect harmony with the ſcene, and with all our feelings. They beat exact time with their oars, and obſerved the harmony and the cadence with the utmoſt preciſion. We liſtened with infinite pleaſure to this melancholy concert, and felt the vanity of operas and oratorios. There is often a ſolemnity and a pathetic in the modulation of theſe ſimple productions, that cauſes a much ſtronger effect, than the compo-

compoſition of the greateſt maſters, aſſiſted by all the boaſted rules of counter-point.

At laſt they ſung us aſleep, and we awoke forty miles diſtant from Sicily. We were now on the main ocean, and ſaw no land but Mount Ætna; which is the perpetual polar ſtar of theſe ſeas. We had a fine breeze, and about two o'clock we diſcovered the iſland of Malta; and in leſs than three hours more, we reached the city of Valetta. The approach of the iſland is very fine, although the ſhore is rather low and rocky. It is every where made inacceſſible to an enemy, by an infinite number of fortifications. The rock, in many places, has been ſloped into the form of a glacis, with ſtrong parapets and intrenchments running behind it.

The entry into the port is very narrow, and is commanded by a ſtrong caſtle on either ſide. We were hailed from each of

theſe, and obliged to give a ſtrict account of ourſelves; and on our arrival at the ſide of the key, we were viſited by an officer from the health-office, and obliged to give oath with regard to the circumſtances of our voyage.—He behaved in the civileſt manner, and immediately ſent us Mr. Rutter, the Engliſh conſul, for whom we had letters of recommendation.

On getting on ſhore, we found ourſelves in a new world indeed.—The ſtreets crowded with well-dreſſed people, who have all the appearance of health and affluence; whereas at Syracuſe, there was ſcarce a creature to be ſeen; and even thoſe few had the appearance of diſeaſe and wretchedneſs.—Mr. Rutter immediately conducted us to an inn, which had more the appearance of a palace. We have had an excellent ſupper, and good Burgundy; and as this is the king's birthday, we have almoſt got tipſey to his health. We are now going

ing into clean, comfortable beds, in expectation of the ſweeteſt ſlumbers.—Think of the luxury of this, after being five long days without throwing off our cloaths.—Good night. I would not loſe a moment of it for the world.—People may ſay what they pleaſe, but there is no enjoyment in living in perpetual eaſe and affluence, and the true luxury is only to be attained by undergoing a few hardſhips.—But this is no time to philoſophiſe. So adieu.

LETTER XV.

Malta, June 5th.

OUR banker, Mr. Pouſilach, was here before we were up, inviting us to dine with him at his country-houſe, from whence we are juſt now returned. He gave us a noble entertainment, ſerved on plate, with an elegant deſert, and a great variety of wines.

After dinner we went to viſit the principal villas of the iſland; particularly thoſe of the grand maſter and the general of the gallies, which lie contiguous to each other. Theſe are nothing great or magnificent; but they are admirably contrived for a hot climate, where, of all things, ſhade is the moſt deſirable. The orange groves are indeed very fine, and the fruit they bear is

ſuperior

ſuperior to any thing you have ſeen either in Spain or Portugal.

The aſpect of the country is far from being pleaſing: the whole iſland is a great rock of very white free-ſtone, and the ſoil that covers this rock, in moſt places, is not more than five or ſix inches deep; yet, what is ſingular, we found their crop in general was exceedingly abundant. They account for it from the copious dews that fall during the ſpring and ſummer months; and pretend likewiſe, that there is a moiſture in the rock below the ſoil, that is of great advantage to the corn and cotton, keeping its roots perpetually moiſt and cool; without which ſingular quality, they ſay, they could have no crops at all, the heat of the ſun is ſo exceedingly violent.

Their barley harveſt has been over ſome time ago; and they are juſt now finiſhing that of the wheat. The whole iſland pro-

duces

duces corn only ſufficient to ſupport its inhabitants for five months, or little more; but the crop they moſt depend upon is the cotton. They began ſowing it about three weeks ago, and it will be finiſhed in a week more. The time of reaping it is in the month of October and beginning of November.

They pretend that the cotton produced from this plant, which is ſown and reaped in four months, is of a much ſuperior quality to that of the cotton-tree. I compared them, but I cannot ſay I found it ſo; this is indeed the fineſt, but that of the cotton-tree is by much the ſtrongeſt texture. The plant riſes to the height of a foot and a half, and is covered with a number of nuts or pods full of cotton: Theſe, when ripe, they are at great pains to cut off every morning before ſun-riſe; for the heat of the ſun immediately turns the cotton yellow; which, indeed, we ſaw from thoſe pods they ſave for ſeed.

They manufacture their cotton into a great variety of ſtuffs. Their ſtockings are exceedingly fine. Some of them, they aſſured us, had been ſold for ten ſequins a pair. Their coverlits and blankets are eſteemed all over Europe. Of theſe the principal manufactures are eſtabliſhed in the little iſland of Gozzo, where the people are ſaid to be more induſtrious than thoſe of Malta, as they are more excluded from the world, and have fewer inducements to idleneſs. Here the ſugar-cane is ſtill cultivated with ſucceſs, though not in any conſiderable quantity.

The Malteſe oranges certainly deſerve the character they have of being the fineſt in the world. The ſeaſon continues for upwards of ſeven months; from November till the middle of June; during which time, thoſe beautiful trees are always covered with abundance of this delicious fruit. Many of them are of the red kind, much

ſuperior,

ſuperior, in my opinion, to the others, which are rather too luſcious. They are produced, I am told, from the common orange bud, engrafted on the pomegranate ſtock. The juice of this fruit is red as blood, and of a fine flavour. The greateſt part of their crop is ſent in preſents to the different courts of Europe, and to the relations of the chevaliers. It was not without a good deal of difficulty that we procured a few cheſts for our friends at Naples.

The induſtry of the Malteſe in cultivating their little iſland is inconceivable. There is not an inch of ground loſt in any part of it; and where there was not ſoil enough, they have brought over ſhips and boats loaded with it from Sicily, where there is plenty and to ſpare. The whole iſland is full of incloſures of free-ſtone, which gives the country a very uncouth and a very barren aſpect; and, in ſummer, reflects ſuch a light and heat, that it is ex-

ceedingly diſagreeable and offenſive to the eyes. The incloſures are very ſmall and irregular, according to the inclination of the ground. This, they ſay, they are obliged to obſerve, notwithſtanding the deformity it occaſions; otherwiſe the floods, to which they are ſubject, would ſoon carry off their ſoil.

The iſland is covered over with country houſes and villages, beſides ſeven cities, for ſo they term them; but there are only two, the Valetta and the Citta Vecchia, that by any means deſerve that appellation. Every little village has a noble church, elegantly finiſhed and adorned with ſtatues of marble, rich tapeſtry, and a large quantity of ſilver plate. They are by much the handſomeſt country churches I have ever ſeen. But I am interrupted in my writing, by the beginning (I am told) of a very fine ſhow. If it be ſo, I ſhall give you ſome account of it by and by.

Eleven at night. The ſhow is now finiſhed, and has afforded us great entertainment. It was the departure of a Malteſe ſquadron to aſſiſt the French againſt the Bey of Tunis, who, it ſeems, has fallen under the diſpleaſure of the grand monarque, becauſe he refuſed to deliver up without ranſom, the Corſican ſlaves that were taken before the French were in poſſeſſion of that iſland. The ſquadron conſiſted of three gallies; the largeſt with nine hundred men, each of the others with ſeven hundred; three galliots, and ſeveral *ſcampavias*, ſo called from their exceeding ſwiftneſs. Theſe immenſe bodies were all worked by oars, and moved with great regularity. The admiral went firſt, and the reſt in order, according to their dignity. The ſea was crowded with boats, and the ramparts and fortifications were filled with company. The port reſounded on all ſides with the diſcharge of heavy artillery, which was anſwered by the gallies and galliots as they

left the harbour. As the echo is here uncommonly great, it produced a very noble effect.

There were about thirty knights in each galley, making ſignals all the way to their miſtreſſes, who were weeping for their departure upon the baſtions; for theſe gentlemen pay almoſt as little regard to their vows of chaſtity, as the prieſts and confeſſors do. After viewing the ſhow from the ramparts, we took a boat and followed the ſquadron for ſome time, and did not return till long after ſun-ſet.

We have been admiring the wonderful ſtrength of this place, both by nature and art.—It is certainly the happieſt ſituation that can be imagined. The city ſtands upon a peninſula, betwixt two of the fineſt ports in the world, which are defended by almoſt impregnable fortifications. That on the ſouth-eaſt ſide of the city is the largeſt,

largeſt. It runs about two miles into the heart of the iſland, and is ſo very deep, and ſurrounded by ſuch high grounds and fortifications, that they aſſured us, the largeſt ſhips of war might ride here in the moſt ſtormy weather, almoſt without a cable.

This beautiful baſon is divided into five diſtinct harbours, all equally ſafe, and each capable of containing an immenſe number of ſhipping. The mouth of the harbour is ſcarcely a quarter of a mile broad, and is commanded on each ſide by batteries that would tear the ſtrongeſt ſhip to pieces before ſhe could enter. Beſides this, it is fronted by a quadruple battery, one above the other, the largeſt of which is *à fleur d'eau*, or on a level with the water. Theſe are mounted with about 80 of their heavieſt artillery; ſo that this harbour, I think, may really be conſidered as impregnable; and indeed the Turks have ever found it ſo, and I believe ever will.

The harbour on the north ſide of the city, although they only uſe it for fiſhing, and as a place of quarantine, would, in any other part of the world, be conſidered as ineſtimable. It is likewiſe defended by very ſtrong works; and in the centre of the baſon there is an iſland on which they have built a caſtle and a lazaret.

The fortifications of Malta are indeed a moſt ſtupendous work. All the boaſted catacombs of Rome and Naples are a trifle to the immenſe excavations that have been made in this little iſland. The ditches, of a vaſt ſize, are all cut out of the ſolid rock. Theſe extend for a great many miles; and raiſe our aſtoniſhment to think that ſo ſmall a ſtate has ever been able to make them.

One ſide of the iſland is ſo completely fortified by nature, that there was nothing left for art. The rock is of a great height, and

and abſolutely perpendicular from the ſea for ſeveral miles. It is very ſingular, that on this ſide there are ſtill the veſtiges of ſeveral ancient roads, with the tracks of carriages worn deep in the rocks: Theſe roads are now terminated by the precipice, with the ſea beneath; and ſhew to a demonſtration, that this iſland has in former ages been of a much larger ſize than it is at preſent; but the convulſion that occaſioned its diminution is probably much beyond the reach of any hiſtory or tradition. It has often been obſerved, notwithſtanding the very great diſtance of mount Ætna, that this iſland has generally been more or leſs affected by its eruptions, and they think it probable, that on ſome of thoſe occaſions a part of it may have been ſhaken into the ſea.

We have now an opportunity of obſerving that one half of mount Ætna is clearly diſcovered

diſcovered from Malta. They reckon the diſtance near 200 Italian miles. And the people here aſſure us, that in the great eruptions of that mountain, their whole iſland is illuminated; and from the reflection in the water, there appears a great track of fire in the ſea all the way from Malta to Sicily. The thundering of the mountain is likewiſe diſtinctly heard.—Good night.—I am fatigued with this day's expedition, and ſhall finiſh my letter to-morrow.

June 6th. As the city of Valetta is built upon a hill, none of the ſtreets except the key are level. They are all paved with white free-ſtone, which not only creates a great duſt, but from its colour is likewiſe ſo offenſive to the eyes, that moſt of the people here are remarkably weak-ſighted. The principal buildings are the palace of the grand maſter, the infirmary, the arſe-

nal,

nal, the inns or hotels of the Seven Tongues, and the great church of St. John. The palace is a noble though a plain ſtructure, and the grand maſter (who ſtudies conveniency more than magnificence) is more comfortable and commodiouſly lodged than any prince in Europe, the king of Sardinia perhaps only excepted. The great ſtair is the eaſieſt and the beſt I ever ſaw.

St. John's is a magnificent church. The pavement, in particular, is reckoned the richeſt in the world. It is entirely compoſed of ſepulchral monuments of the fineſt marbles, prophyry, lapis lazuli, and a variety of other valuable ſtones, admirably joined together, and at an incredible expence; repreſenting in a kind of Moſaic, the arms, inſignia, &c. of the perſons whoſe names they are intended to commemorate. In the magnificence of theſe monuments, the heirs of the grand maſters

and commanders have long vied with each other.

We went this day to ſee the celebration of their church ſervice. It ſeems to be more overcharged with parade and ceremony than what I have ever obſerved even in any other catholic country. The number of genuflections before the altar, the kiſſing of the prior's hand, the holding up of his robes by the ſubaltern prieſts, the ceremony of throwing incenſe upon all the knights of the great croſs, and neglecting the poorer knights, with many other articles, appeared to us highly ridiculous; and moſt eſſentially different indeed from that purity and ſimplicity of worſhip that conſtitutes the very eſſence of true chriſtianity; and of which the great pattern they pretend to copy, ſet ſo very noble an example.

This

This day (the 6th of June) is held as a thankſgiving for their deliverance from a terrible conſpiracy that was formed about twenty-one years ago, by the Turkiſh ſlaves; at one ſtroke to put an end to the whole order of Malta. All the fountains of the place were to be poiſoned; and every ſlave had taken a ſolemn oath to put his maſter to death.

It was diſcovered by a Jew, who kept a coffee-houſe. He underſtood the Turkiſh language, and overheard ſome diſcourſe that he thought ſuſpicious. He went immediately and informed the grand maſter. The ſuſpected perſons were inſtantly ſeized and put to the torture, and ſoon confeſſed the whole plot. The executions were ſhocking. One hundred and twenty-five were put to death by various torments. Some were burned alive, ſome were broken on the wheel, and ſome were torn to pieces by

by the four galleys rowing different ways, and each bringing off its limb. Since that time, the ſlaves have been much more ſtrictly watched, and have leſs liberty than formerly. Adieu. I ſhall write to you again before we leave Malta.

Yours, &c.

LETTER XVI.

Malta, June 7th.

THIS day we made an expedition thro' the iſland in coaches drawn by one mule each; the only kind of vehicle the place affords. Our conductors could ſpeak nothing but Arabic, which is ſtill the language of the common people of Malta; ſo that you may believe we did not reap much benefit from their converſation. We went firſt to the ancient city of Melita, which is near the center of the iſland, and commands a view of the whole; and in clear weather, they pretend, of part of Barbary, and of Sicily. The city is ſtrongly fortified, and is governed by an officer called the Hahem. He received us very politely, and ſhewed us the old palace, which is not indeed much worth the ſeeing. The cathedral is a very fine church; and although

of

of an exceeding large ſize, is at preſent entirely hung with crimſon damaſk richly laced with gold.

The catacombs, not far from this city, are a great work. They are ſaid to extend for fifteen miles under ground; however, this you are obliged to take on the credit of your guides, as it would rather be riſking too much to put it to the trial. Many people, they aſſure us, have been loſt from advancing too far in them; the prodigious number of branches making it next to impoſſible to find the way out again.

From this we went to ſee the Boſquetta, where the grand maſter has his country palace; by the accounts we had of it at Valetta, we expected to find a foreſt ſtored with deer and every kind of game, as they talked much of the great hunts that were made every year in theſe woods.—We were not a little ſurpriſed to find only a few

few ſcattered trees, and about half a dozen deer; but as this is the only thing like a wood in the iſland, it is eſteemed a very great curioſity. The palace is as little worth ſeeing as the foreſt; though indeed the proſpect from the top of it is very fine. The furniture is three or four hundred years old, and in the moſt Gothic taſte that can be imagined: but indeed the grand maſter ſeldom or never reſides here.

The great ſource of water that ſupplies the city of Valletta, takes its riſe near to this place; and there is an aqueduct compoſed of ſome thouſand arches, that conveys it from thence to the city. The whole of this immenſe work was finiſhed at the private expence of one of the grand maſters.

Not far from the old city there is a ſmall church, dedicated to St. Paul; and juſt by the church, a miraculous ſtatue of the ſaint with a viper on his hand; ſuppoſed to be

placed on the very ſpot on which the houſe ſtood where he was received after his ſhipwreck on this iſland, and where he ſhook the viper off his hand into the fire without being hurt by it: at which time the Malteſe aſſure us the ſaint curſed all the venomous animals of the iſland, and baniſhed them for ever; juſt as St. Patrick treated thoſe of his favourite iſle. Whether this be the cauſe of it or not, we ſhall leave to divines to determine (though if it had, I think St. Luke would have mentioned it in the Acts of the Apoſtles); but the fact is certain, that there are no venomous animals in Malta. They aſſured us that vipers had been brought from Sicily, and died almoſt immediately on their arrival.

Adjoining to the church there is the celebrated grotto in which the ſaint was impriſoned. It is looked upon with the utmoſt reverence and veneration; and if the ſtories they tell of it be true, it is well entitled

entitled to it all. It is exceedingly damp, and produces (I believe by a kind of petrifaction from the water) a whitiſh kind of ſtone, which they aſſure us, when reduced to powder, is a ſovereign remedy in many diſeaſes, and ſaves the lives of thouſands every year. There is not a houſe in the iſland that is not provided with it: and they tell us there are many boxes of it ſent annually not only to Sicily and Italy, but likewiſe to the Levant and the Eaſt Indies; and (what is conſidered as a daily ſtanding miracle) notwithſtanding this perpetual conſumption, it has never been exhauſted, nor even ſenſibly diminiſhed; the ſaint always taking care to ſupply them with a freſh quantity the day following.

You may be ſure we did not fail to ſtuff our pockets with this wonderful ſtone; I ſuſpected they would have prevented us, as I did not ſuppoſe the ſaint would have worked for heretics; however, neither he nor

the prieſts had any objection, and we gave them a few Pauls * more for their civility. I taſted ſome of it, and believe it is a very harmleſs thing. It taſtes like exceeding bad Magneſia, and I believe has pretty much the ſame effects. They give about a tea-ſpoonful of it to children in the ſmall-pox and in fevers. It produces a copious ſweat about an hour after, and, they ſay, never fails to be of ſervice. It is likewiſe eſteemed a certain remedy againſt the bite of all venomous animals. There is a very fine ſtatue of St. Paul in the middle of this grotto, to which they aſcribe great powers.

We were delighted, on our way back to the city, with the beauty of the ſetting-ſun; much ſuperior, I think, to what I have ever obſerved it in Italy. The whole of the eaſtern part of the heavens, for half an hour after ſun-ſet, was of a fine deep

* A ſmall ſilver coin.

purple,

purple, and made a beautiful appearance: this the Malteſe tell us is generally the caſe every evening, at this ſeaſon of the year.

I forgot to ſay any thing of our preſentation to the grand maſter, for which I aſk pardon both of you and him.—His name is Pinto, and of a Portugueſe family. He has now been at the head of this ſingular little ſtate for upwards of thirty years. He received us with great politeneſs, and was highly pleaſed to find that ſome of us had been in Portugal. He mentioned the intimate commercial connexions that had ſo long ſubſiſted betwixt our nations, and expreſſed his deſire of being of ſervice to us, and of rendering our ſtay in his iſland as agreeable as poſſible. He is a clear-headed, ſenſible, little old man; which, at ſo advanced a period of life, is very uncommon. Although he is conſiderably upwards of ninety, he retains all the faculties of his

mind in perfection. He has no miniſter, but manages every thing himſelf; and has immediate information of the moſt minute occurrences. He walks up and down ſtairs, and even to church, without aſſiſtance; and has the appearance as if he would ſtill live for many years. His houſehold attendance and court are all very princely; and as grand maſter of Malta, he is more abſolute, and poſſeſſes more power than moſt ſovereign princes. His titles are Serene Highneſs and Eminence; and as he has the diſpoſal of all lucrative offices, he makes of his councils what he pleaſes; beſides, in all the councils that compoſe the juriſdiction of this little nation, he himſelf preſides, and has two votes. Since he was choſen grand maſter, he has already given away 126 commenderies, ſome of them worth upwards of 2000*l.* a year; beſides priories and other offices of profit.—He has the diſpoſal of twenty-one commenderies and one priory every five

five years; and as there are always a number of expectants, he is very much courted.

He is chosen by a committee of twenty-one; which committee is nominated by the seven nations, three out of each nation. The election must be over within three days after the death of the former grand master; and during these three days, there is scarce a soul that sleeps at Malta: all is cabal and intrigue; and most of the knights are masked, to prevent their particular attachments and connexions from being known: the moment the election is over, every thing returns again to its former channel.

The land force of Malta is equal to the number of men in the island fit to bear arms. They have about 500 regulars belonging to the ships of war; and 150 compose the guard of the prince. The two islands of Malta and Gozzo contain about

150,000 inhabitants. The men are exceeding robuſt and hardy. I have ſeen them row for ten or twelve hours without intermiſſion, and without even appearing to be fatigued.

Their ſea force conſiſts of four galleys, three galliots, four ſhips of ſixty guns, and a frigate of thirty-ſix, beſides a number of the quick-ſailing little veſſels called Scampavias (literally, Runaways). Their ſhips, galleys, and fortifications, are not only well ſupplied with excellent artillery, but they have likewiſe invented a kind of ordnance of their own, unknown to all the world beſides. For we found, to our no ſmall amazement, that the rocks were not only cut into fortifications, but likewiſe into artillery to defend theſe fortifications; being hollowed out in many places into the form of immenſe mortars. The charge is ſaid to be about a barrel of gunpowder, over which they place a large piece of wood,

made

made exactly to fit the mouth of the chamber. On this they heap a great quantity of cannon balls, ſhells, or other deadly materials; and when an enemy's ſhip approaches the harbour, they fire the whole into the air; and they pretend it produces a very great effect, making a ſhower for two or three hundred yards round that would ſink any veſſel.

Notwithſtanding the ſuppoſed bigotry of the Malteſe, the ſpirit of toleration is ſo ſtrong, that a moſque has lately been built for their ſworn enemies the Turks. Here the poor ſlaves are allowed to enjoy their religion in peace. It happened lately that ſome idle boys diſturbed them during their ſervice; they were immediately ſent to priſon, and ſeverely puniſhed. The police indeed is much better regulated than in the neighbouring countries, and aſſaſſinations and robberies are very uncommon; the laſt of which crimes the grand maſter puniſhes

puniſhes with the utmoſt ſeverity. But he is ſaid, perhaps in compliance with the prejudice of his nation, to be much more relax with regard to the firſt.

Perhaps Malta is the only country in the world where duelling is permitted by law.—As their whole eſtabliſhment is originally founded on the wild and romantic principles of chivalry, they have ever found it too inconſiſtent with thoſe principles to aboliſh duelling; but they have laid it under ſuch reſtrictions as greatly to leſſen its danger. Theſe are curious enough.—The duelliſts are obliged to decide their quarrel in one particular ſtreet of the city; and if they preſume to fight any where elſe, they are liable to the rigour of the law. But what is not leſs ſingular, and much more in their favour, they are obliged, under the moſt ſevere penalties, to put up their ſword, when ordered ſo to do, by a *woman*, a *prieſt*, or a *knight*.

Under

Under theſe limitations, in the midſt of a great city, one would imagine it almoſt impoſſible that a duel could ever end in blood; however, this is not the caſe:—A croſs is always painted on the wall oppoſite to the ſpot where a knight has been killed, in commemoration of his fall.—We counted about twenty of theſe croſſes.

About three months ago, two knights had a diſpute at a billiard table.—One of them, after giving a great deal of abuſive language, added a blow; but, to the aſtoniſhmet of all Malta (in whoſe annals there is not a ſimilar inſtance), after ſo great a provocation, he abſolutely refuſed to fight his antagoniſt.—The challenge was repeated, and he had time to reflect on the conſequences, but ſtill he refuſed to enter the liſts.—He was condemned to make *amende honorable* in the great church of St. John for forty-five days ſucceſſively; then to be confined in a dungeon without

light for five years, after which he is to remain a priſoner in the caſtle for life. The unfortunate young man who received the blow is likewiſe in diſgrace, as he has not had an opportunity of wiping it out in the blood of his adverſary.

This has been looked upon as a very ſingular affair, and is ſtill one of the principal topics of converſation. The firſt part of the ſentence has already been executed, and the poor wretch is now in his dungeon. Nor is it thought that any abatement will be made in what remains.

If the legiſlature in other countries puniſhed with equal rigour thoſe that do fight, as it does in this thoſe that do not, I believe we ſhould ſoon have an end of duelling: but I ſhould imagine the puniſhment for fighting ought never to be a capital one (but rather ſomething ignominious); and the puniſhment for not fighting ſhould always be

be ſo, or at leaſt ſome ſevere corporal puniſhment; for ignominy will have as little effect on the perſon who is willing to ſubmit to the appellation of a coward, as the fear of death on one who makes it his glory to deſpiſe it.

The Malteſe ſtill talk with horror of a ſtorm that happened here on the 29th of October 1757, of which, as it was of a very ſingular nature, I ſhall tranſlate you ſome account from a little book they have given me, written on that ſubject.

About three quarters of an hour after midnight, there appeared to the ſouth-weſt of the city a great black cloud, which, as it approached, changed its colour, till at laſt it became like a flame of fire mixed with black ſmoke. A dreadful noiſe was heard on its approach, that alarmed the whole city. It paſſed over part of the port, and came firſt upon an Engliſh ſhip, which

in

in an inſtant was torn to pieces, and nothing left but the hulk; part of the maſts, ſails, and cordage were carried along with the cloud to a conſiderable diſtance. The ſmall boats and fellouques that fell in its way were all broken to pieces, and ſunk. The noiſe increaſed and became more frightful. A ſentinel, terrified at its approach, run into his box: both he and it were lifted up and carried into the ſea, where he periſhed. It then traverſed a conſiderable part of the city, and laid in ruins almoſt every thing that ſtood in its way. Several houſes were laid level with the ground, and it did not leave one ſteeple in its paſſage. The bells of ſome of them, together with the ſpires, were carried to a conſiderable diſtance. The roofs of the churches were demoliſhed and beat down, which, if it had happened in the day-time, muſt have had dreadful conſequences, as all the world would immediately have run to the churches.

It went off at the north-eaſt point of the city; and demoliſhing the light-houſe, is ſaid to have mounted up into the air, with a frightful noiſe; and paſſed over the ſea to Sicily, where it tore up ſome trees, and did other damage, but nothing conſiderable; as its fury had been moſtly ſpent upon Malta. The number of killed and wounded amounted to near 200; and the loſs of ſhipping, houſes, and churches, was very conſiderable.

Several treatiſes have been written to account for this ſingular hurricane, but I have found nothing at all ſatisfactory. The ſentiments of the people are conciſe and poſitive. They declare, with one voice, that it was a legion of devils let looſe, to puniſh them for their ſins. There are a thouſand people in Malta that will take their oath they ſaw them within the cloud, all as black as pitch, and breathing out fire and brimſtone. They add, that if there had

had not been a few godly people amongſt them, their whole city would certainly have been involved in one univerſal deſtruction.

The horſe races of Malta are of a very uncommon kind. They are performed without either ſaddle, bridle, whip, or ſpur; and yet the horſes are ſaid to run full ſpeed, and to afford a great deal of diverſion. They are accuſtomed to the ground for ſome weeks before; and although it is entirely over rock and pavement, there are very ſeldom any accidents. They have races of aſſes and mules performed in the ſame manner, four times every year. The rider is only furniſhed with a machine like a ſhoemaker's awl, to prick on his courſer if he is lazy.

As Malta is an epitome of all Europe, and an aſſemblage of the younger brothers, who are commonly the beſt, of its firſt fa-

milies, it is probably one of the beſt academies for politeneſs in this part of the globe; beſides, where every one is entitled by law as well as cuſtom, to demand ſatisfaction for the leaſt breach of it, people are under a neceſſity of being very exact and circumſpect, both with regard to their words and actions.

All the knights and commanders have much the appearance of gentlemen, and men of the world. We met with no character in extreme. The ridicules and prejudices of every particular nation, are by degrees ſoftened and wore off, by the familiar intercourſe and colliſion with each other. It is curious to obſerve the effect it produces upon the various people that compoſe this little medley. The French ſkip, the German ſtrut, and the Spaniſh ſtalk, are all mingled together in ſuch ſmall proportions, that none of them are ſtriking;

yet every one of theſe nations ſtill retain ſomething of their original characteriſtic: It is only the exuberance of it that is wore off; and it is ſtill eaſy to diſtinguiſh the inhabitants of the ſouth and north ſide of the Pyrenees, as well as thoſe of the eaſt and weſt ſide of the Rhine: for though the Pariſian has, in a great meaſure, loſt his aſſuming air, the Spaniard his taciturnity and ſolemnity, the German his formality and his pride; yet ſtill you ſee the German, the Frenchman, and the Spaniard: It is only the caricature, that formerly made them ridiculous, that has diſappeared.

This inſtitution, which is a ſtrange compound of the military and eccleſiaſtic, has now ſubſiſted for near ſeven hundred years; and though, I believe, one of the firſt-born, has long ſurvived every other child of chivalry. It poſſeſſes great riches in

in moſt of the catholic countries of Europe; and did ſo in England too, before the time of Henry VIII. but that capricious tyrant did not chuſe that any inſtitution, however ancient or reſpected, ſhould remain in his dominions, that had any doubt of his ſupremacy and infallibility; he therefore ſeized on all their poſſeſſions, at the ſame time that he enriched himſelf by the plunder of the church. It was in vain for them to plead that they were rather a military than an eccleſiaſtic order, and by their valour had been of great ſervice to Europe, in their wars againſt the infidels: it was not agreeable to his ſyſtem ever to hear a reaſon for any thing; and no perſon could poſſibly be right, that was capable of ſuppoſing that the king could be wrong.

Malta, as well as Sicily, was long under the tyranny of the Saracens; from which

they were both delivered about the middle of the eleventh century, by the valour of the Normans: after which time, the fate of Malta commonly depended on that of Sicily, till the emperor Charles V. about the year 1530, gave it, together with the iſland of Gozzo, to the knights of St. John of Jeruſalem, who at that time had loſt the iſland of Rhodes. In teſtimony of this conceſſion, the grand maſter is ſtill obliged, every year, to ſend a falcon to the king of Sicily, or his viceroy; and on every new ſucceſſion, to ſwear allegiance, and to receive from the hands of the Sicilian monarch, the inveſtiture of theſe two iſlands.

Ever ſince our arrival here, the weather has been perfectly clear and ſerene, without a cloud in the ſky; and for ſome time after ſun-ſet, the heavens exhibit a moſt beautiful appearance, which I don't recollect to

have obſerved any where elſe. The eaſtern part of the hemiſphere appears of a rich deep purple, and the weſtern is the true yellow glow of Claud Lorrain, that you uſed to admire ſo much. The weather, however, is not intolerably hot; the thermometer ſtands commonly betwixt 75 and 76. Adieu. We are now preparing for a long voyage, and it is not eaſy to ſay from whence I ſhall write you next.

Ever yours.

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